Kent on Sunday

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North & West edition No 789

INTERVIEW

Rosie Duffield on life at Westminster

In-depth interview with Kent's only Labour MP

ENVIRONMENT

Goodwin Sands gets key support

Campaign group's delight in protection bid

ENTERTAINMENT

Bagpuss tour heads to castle

Celebration of classic children's TV creations

POLITICS

Who will be next?

As Fallon falls, parliament braces itself for more sleaze revelations

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Let's keep a sense of perspective over sleaze

JUST when the focus of the nation and its policy makers should be on the complexity and significance of the Brexit negotiations, everyone has been caught up in what is being widely described as the latest Westminster sleaze scandal.

Of all people, Sir Michael Fallon not only found himself caught up in it, but forced to resign his post as well.

For those apparently ever increasing number of people who seem to wish politicians nothing but ill-will, no doubt this week has brought them plenty of pleasure and the opportunity to say "I told you so" to anyone unfortunate enough to have to listen.

But while the list of, mostly, unsubstantiated claims circulated online this week, you could not but think there was rather a case of making a mountain out of a molehill in many of the allegations.

Let's be clear, forcing yourself onto someone or making inappropriate - rather than just misjudged - comments is worthy of condemnation and public shaming. But making a poor pass at someone who rebuffs it and no-one says any more about it, is hardly worth of destroying a career over.

In today's edition Sir Roger Gale draws comparisons with the Harvey Weinstein allegations and he's right to do so. There is a feeling this is all rather an attempt to crowbar politicians into the same category. And while there would appear to be a couple of those cases, the majority seem like nothing in comparison.

Perhaps it's all the tip of an iceberg we're about to discover, but however amusing for some it may be to see some high profile figures squirm, we do need to remember that our appetite for tittle-tattle can also be the ruin of someone's life and reputation.

Kick out the genuinely guilty or criminal but let's keep a sense of perspective.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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£6bn crossing to get an extra lane to ease flows

By Tom Pyman
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THE Lower Thames Crossing is now set to feature an extra lane in both directions as highways bosses adjust plans for the £6 billion project.

Highways England is now proposing that the route between the A2 in Kent and A13 in Essex is three lanes in both directions, rather than two, which will involve widening the A2 to junction 1 of the M2, near the village of Shorne, to improve traffic flows.

The proposed junction with the A226 in Gravesend has also been removed following feedback from residents and businesses that it would increase local traffic in the area.

Further changes have been suggested on the other side of the river, including a new junction and link road at Tilbury, while a new design for the proposed junction with the M25 between junctions 29 and 30 is now being progressed.

Bosses say it aims to provide a safer junction with greater capacity that also blends better with the local landscape.

Christian Brodie, chairman of South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which aims to boost economic growth in the county, said: "It is clear Highways England has listened to businesses and local communities.

"We recognise there are those on both sides of the Thames that will be affected, but believe Highways England is doing all it can to mitigate the impact. The new crossing will have a positive impact on the economy of the SELEP area, and the UK as a whole.

"It is much more than just a tunnel with a road at either end. We welcome the focus of Highways England on ensuring it connects well with the wider road network in Kent and Essex."

Jo James, chief executive of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, added: "The proposal to make each tunnel three lanes wide, and at the same time reduce the impact of HGVs on local communities, is great news.

"This update will strengthen the confidence of the business community that the project team is moving through the design stage and towards getting diggers on site as quickly as possible."

It comes after some local campaigners opposed to the crossing claimed they had been "left in the dark" over developments.

The crossing aims to be open by 2027, which is at the back end of the target period proposed by the government when it announced its preferred route back in April.

CROSSING: Lower Thames Crossing is designed to ease traffic using the Dartford Crossing

Medical school call gathers momentum to help ease shortages

NHS chiefs have thrown their weight behind calls for a medical school in east Kent to address a dramatic shortage of GPs and hospital doctors.

MPs and campaigners have made the case for several months as pressure continues to grow on health services in the east of the county.

The trust running Kent & Canterbury Hospital, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, controversially announced earlier this year that some 35 people who normally attend by ambulance every day with conditions such as heart attacks, strokes and pneumonia, would instead be diverted to the William Harvey in Ashford and the QEQM in Margate.

The changes, which health chiefs insist are only temporary, but have been in place since June, are the result of the trust struggling to recruit enough permanent consultants, though some vacancies have been filled in recent weeks.

Long-term, the trust wants to "reorganise" its services at the three hospitals and is set to bring proposals forward for public consultation in the spring.

Meanwhile, hundreds of patients in Folkestone are yet to be reallocated a new GP after a major surgery closed its doors for good earlier this week, sparking fears of increased pressure on A&E departments in other areas of the county.

Hazel Carpenter, accountable officers for the east Kent clinical commissioning groups, which plan local healthcare said: "We have a serious shortage of GPs as well as hospital doctors. A medical school would mean we could attract and train people, many of whom will want to be part of the permanent medical workforce in east Kent.

"It will also help to raise the ambition and educational attainment of children and young people in east Kent. The universities, NHS and whole community are united on this – we must have a medical school."

QEII Bridge closed for hours after lorry and car smash

A WOMAN in her twenties was left fighting for her life after a smash in the early hours of Friday morning caused the QEII Bridge to be closed for nine hours.

It caused huge delays on both the Kent and Essex side of the crossing, with all cars diverted through the tunnels.

It followed a crash at 4.40am between a lorry and an Audi A1 car on the Kent side of the bridge.

At the time of going to press, one man had been arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving. A woman was in a life-threatening condition in a London hospital.

The road was eventually reopened at around 1.30pm. Motorists using the crossing faced delays of more than an hour during the peak congestion periods.

Lucky winner finally claims £1m Lottery raffle prize pot

A £1 million National Lottery prize from earlier this month has finally been claimed.

The Lotto Millionaire Raffle prize ticket had been bought in Dover and came up trumps in the October 11 draw. However, no one had claimed the prize until this week.

However, the identity of the lucky winner looks likely to be kept secret as they have so far not opted to go public.

Andy Carter, senior winners' advisor at The National Lottery said: "We're delighted that the winner of this amazing prize has now come forward and we hope that they will enjoy their win. It would have been awful if the ticket-holder had missed out on this substantial and life-changing amount of money."

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Shine on Beaver Moon, as we get clear view

SKYGAZERS got a clear view of the Beaver Moon on Friday and Saturday as it appeared larger and brighter than normal.

The second 'supermoon' of the year was visible overnight and with clear skies for much of the county, many were able to witness the Moon looking around 14 per cent larger and 30 per cent brighter.

In the Northern Hemisphere, November's full moon occurs at the time of year when hunters used to set traps before waters froze over to ensure a supply of warm furs for winter - hence the name Beaver Moon.

The moon has a slightly elliptical orbit - it does not move round the Earth in a perfect circle. At some points the moon is about five per cent closer to Earth.

Interest rate rise set to push up rental costs, warns financial expert

By Chris Britcher
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RENT costs in Kent could soon start to rise as landlords find themselves facing an interest rate rise - and the possibility of more to come.

The Bank of England hiked interest rates by a quarter of a percent on Thursday - the first rise in over a decade - to bring the interest rate up to 0.5 per cent.

And governor Mark Carney signalled it was likely to keep climbing - up to one per cent by 2020.

This week's rise adds around £31 a month to those with a mortgage of around £250,000.

But while those living in homes with a mortgage will experience the increase, it could be those renting that feel the pain too.

Donna McCreadie is a buy-to-let specialist at Perrys Chartered Accountants, based in its Wrotham office.

She explained: "The increase of interest rates announced by the Bank of England is another blow to buy-to-let landlords, who in recent times have already suffered an increase on tax rates and stamp duty.

GOVERNOR: Mark Carney

"It is a possibility that if a landlord's current mortgage rate is on a variable deal, this will eventually trickle down to the tenants and affect rent levels."

Policymakers on the Bank's nine-strong Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 7-2 in favour of the quarter point rise, which marks the first rates increase since July 2007.

The move comes as the Bank looks to dampen Brexit-fuelled inflation, which it predicts will now peak at around 3.2 per cent this autumn.

The Bank's quarterly inflation report also suggested two more rate hikes are likely over the next three years to return inflation back to its two per cent target, which could see rates hit one per cent by the end of 2020.

Experts estimate that eight million Britons have never seen interest rates rise in their adult lives, with borrowing costs having languished at rock-bottom lows since the financial crisis.

There are fears over the timing of the cut, given the uncertainty amid Brexit negotiations and as Britons are being squeezed by paltry wage growth and sharply rising inflation.

TORCHED: Weinstein effigy

Effigy of film producer goes up in smoke

DISGRACED Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein was set to go up in smoke on Saturday night after he was revealed as the much-anticipated celebrity effigy at this year's Edenbridge Bonfire.

The not-for-profit Edenbridge Bonfire Society has been poking fun at celebrities for over 20 years in its now-traditional event, which attracts more than 10,000 people from across Kent and beyond each year.

It sees an 11-metre 'Guy' go up in flames alongside an effigy of Guy Fawkes, all to raise thousands of pounds for local charities.

Past targets have been a real mixture of public figures, including Donald Trump, Katie Hopkins, Russell Brand, Jonathan Ross, both of the Blairs, Katie Price, Wayne Rooney, Lance Armstrong, Gordon Brown, Anne Robinson, and even Saddam Hussein.

Weinstein was picked by the society to be this year's public figurine at the event after he became embroiled in a string of allegations of sexual assaults against female employees and movie stars.

The Edenbridge event was to take place on Saturday evening, starting with a torchlight procession through the village before the main bonfire event and fireworks.

Refugees need help but not here, says MP

THE government should spend more money helping Middle Eastern child refugees "nearer their homes" to discourage "long and sometimes lethal" journeys to Kent, an MP has claimed.

Gravesham MP Adam Holloway called for the government to prioritise spending in Syria and other war-torn countries, rather than on accommodating the children in Kent.

Speaking in a debate on Calais and unaccompanied child refugees in Europe, he said: "We must do what is right and not just what makes us feel good.

"If we're really going to help those who most need our help, we'll help more people by helping them outside our borders and stopping these immoral pull factors.

"We should be helping the many, not pulling in the few."

Dover MP Charlie Elphicke also spoke of the need to ease the pressure on the county's resources.

Jail for stabbing man in neck on doorstep

A THUG has been jailed after stabbing a man who stepped out of his Folkestone home to take out the rubbish in the neck.

Gerard Keogh, 36 of no fixed address, carried out the knife attack as the victim returned to his front door on March 16.

The court heard how Keogh's victim was the relative of a woman he had been staying with in Folkestone. Earlier that day the pair had a disagreement and Keogh had made threats towards one of her friends. Later that day Keogh tracked her down to the house and without warning charged at the man, who had never met him before, punching him in the face and stabbing him in the neck.

Keogh was acquitted of attempted murder by a jury at Canterbury Crown Court in September, however he did admit to wounding with intent. He also pleaded guilty to theft and criminal damage and was sentenced to nine-and-a-half years in jail. He will serve an additional three years on licence upon his release.

Sports hub begins at former golf club site

WORK started this week on the eagerly anticipated Herne Bay Sports Hub - a multi-million pound community site which will provide a base for local football, hockey, tennis and cricket teams.

Planning permission for the 100-acre site, formerly Herne Bay Golf Club on the Old Thanet Way, was approved in September 2015. It also includes the building of 572 homes, a care home, restaurants, shops, offices and a pub.

It is claimed the project will pump millions of pounds into the local economy, creating more than 1,000 long term and construction jobs.

Mark Quinn, of developers Quinn Estates, said: "We will be delivering an investment of £20 million in this scheme. I think that figure confidently demonstrates how much we want to give back to the community."

Herne Bay MP Sir Roger Gale added: "These playing fields and facilities will be transformative in the sporting life of the town for generations to come and will be of immense value to the town."

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Crackdown to tackle dangers of driving after taking drugs

By Chris Britcher
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A HARD-hitting campaign designed to slow the increase in serious injuries and deaths on our roads caused by driving while under the influence of drugs, has been launched.

Figures released this week revealed that during 2016, there were 59 incidents on the county's roads as a result of drug use. Of those, 16 people were seriously injured and three killed.

The data comes from Kent County Council's road safety team which is spearheading a month-long awareness campaign this month. The campaign highlights how it is impossible to predict how a drug will affect your driving.

Road safety team leader Vicky Harvey said: "Drug drivers can suffer from blurred vision, erratic and aggressive behaviour, nausea, hallucinations, panic attacks, paranoia, shakes, dizziness and fatigue.

"In such a condition, it is a very bad idea to be behind the wheel of a car, for you, your passengers and other people on the roads or pavements.

"Taking drugs and driving will impair your ability to drive – our message is don't let drugs take the driving seat; they affect your ability to concentrate, to react in an emergency and to perceive accurately what's going on around you."

CAMPAIGN: Designed to cut the number of incidents on our roads

There have been over 100 crashes because of drug driving in Kent over the past two years. Chief inspector Richard Smeed added: "Getting a drug-driving conviction could cost you your driving licence, and perhaps even your job and your home, but worse still you could be responsible for causing someone serious injury or death.

"Motorists who do this need to know that drugs stay in the system for longer than alcohol, and often for more than 24 hours.

"It's illegal, it's reckless and it's wrong. It's as simple as that."

The campaign's advertising, which runs across TV, radio and online, features a young woman being a 'puppet' to the drugs she has taken, showing her getting behind the wheel and the life-changing result.

Motorists who get behind the wheel after taking illegal drugs face a criminal record, loss of their licence for at least a year and an unlimited fine.

M20 workmen watch as van in pinched

ROAD crews were left red-faced when crooks pinched a machine they were using while they cutting hedges on the side of the M20 motorway.

A van and the chipper machine attached were stolen between junctions 1 and 2 of the London-bound carriageway on October 4. The van has since been found but the orange Timberwolf chipper machine - which chips the wood being cut - remains missing.

What if revolution had spread the world?

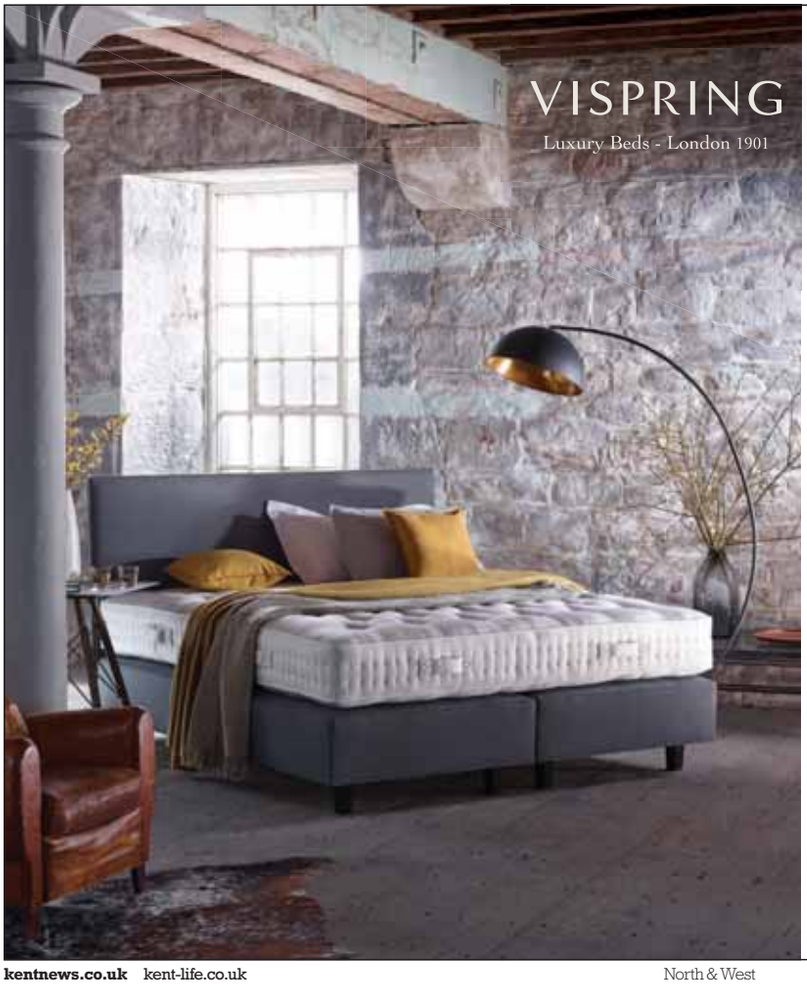
A POLITICAL scientist from the University of Kent has penned a book imagining what life would have been like if the Russian Revolution had spread around the world.

Lenin Lives! is written by Dr Philip Cunliffe, a senior lecturer at the university and coincides with the 100th anniversary of the revolution.

Keep the Fizz on ice

TUNBRIDGE Wells star Cheryl Baker will appear in the return of ITV1 celebrity talent show Dancing On Ice.

The TV presenter and Bucks Fizz star, 63, started training this week for the series which airs in the new year. She said: ''Starting training was such huge fun. I've never skated apart from when I was about 12. I am nervous.''



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Call for cash to help restore Ramsgate Royal Harbour

THE government is being urged to invest in a project to restore Ramsgate Royal Harbour "to its former glory".

The harbour has a rich history, with its royal status being granted in 1821 by King George IV, before acting as a key military port during the Napoleonic Wars and for 'little ships' during Operation Dynamo in the Second World War.

South Thanet MP Craig Mackinlay made the case for a cash boost to communities and local government secretary Sajid Javid in the House of Commons this week.

"The coastal communities fund helps attract more visitors to our coastal communities so they may thrive," he said.

"Will [Mr Javid] promise to consider very carefully any future bid to the fund to restore the front of Ramsgate Royal Harbour, the only royal harbour in the country, to its former glory?"

The minister replied: "The £2.5m already allocated to his constituency will help South Thanet thrive and will help attract more visitors certainly.

"I know he's got a meeting with the local growth minister coming up where he can discuss his plans."

Pair robbed by masked duo in Bluewater car park

CROOKS wearing surgical masks and hoods robbed two people in Bluewater car park on Friday night, demanding their valuables, before slashing their car tyre to prevent a pursuit.

Two shoppers, a man and a woman, were walking back to their car on the second floor of Guildhall car park near John Lewis, when they were approached by the two masked men.

The incident happened at around 7.30pm on Friday.

One of the robbers demanded the male victim handed over his mobile phone and designer watch - the second then demanded the woman's watch but then realised she was not wearing one.

As they were set to flee, one then returned and slashed the victim's offside rear tyre.

The crooks then fled, driving off in a silver coloured BMW.

Now police are appealing for witnesses.

According to Kent Police, one of the suspects was wearing black tracksuit bottoms, a black hooded top and black trainers with a light coloured panel on the front. The other suspect is described as wearing a dark blue tracksuit with a black gilet.

Both suspects are described as male, black and aged between 25 and 35-years old.

They were both wearing their hoods over their heads and had white surgical masks over their faces.

One was also reported to be wearing blue latex gloves.

Anyone with information can call 01474 366 149 quoting crime reference XY/055628/17.

Duo in cocaine arrests

A 34-year-old man and 42-year-old woman from Tonbridge have been arrested on suspicion of supplying cocaine after a stop check of a vehicle led to the discovery of the drug at an address in Whitelake Road.

Both suspects have been released from custody as investigations continue.

Huge fire at log yard

FIREFIGHTERS spent more than 12 hours tackling a major blaze at a log processing yard in Chartham Hatch near Canterbury.

Crews were called on Thursday night to tackled 200 bins of logs and apple bins ablaze - and were still there damping down on Friday morning.

Death after van hits wall

A 70-year-old man has been killed after the van he was driving in smashed into a wall in Hartley, near Longfield.

The crash occured on Thursday on Ash Road when the white Peugeot Bipper van he was driving hit the wall at the juction with Parkfield.

OAP hurt in M2 smash

A WOMAN in her late 70s had to be cut free from the wreckage of her car after a smash between Gillingham and Sittingbourne on the M2 on Wednesday.

Two cars were involved. The pensioner was taken to hospital by paramedics after hydraulic cutters were used to release her.

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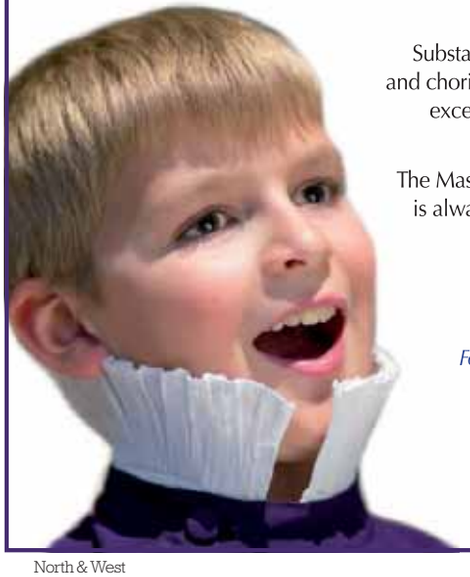
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MPs to hold housing talks

By Tom Pyman
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THE government's housing minister has agreed to meet with local MPs to discuss controversial proposals for thousands more homes, which they claim are a "disproportionate burden on the Medway towns".

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is currently consulting on a strategy to help fix the housing crisis, and has suggested Medway Council needs to provide almost 9,000 more homes, on top of the near-30,000 already earmarked in its local plan - a blueprint used to help shape development and make decisions on planning applications over the next two decades.

The proposals, which represent a staggering 29 per cent uplift in the level of housing to be allocated to Medway, were strongly rejected by the local authority's cabinet last week, and Conservative council leader Alan Jarrett hit out at his own government and insisted he would "not stand idly by whilst our green spaces and our housing market are decimated".

At the heart of the frustration for Medway, which is a unitary authority, is the seemingly more intense focus on the south east region, where the average rise is some 35 per cent, compared to other areas of the country, some of which have even seen a fall in their level of housing need.

ROW: Housing demands are already intense in Medway

Rochester and Strood MP Kelly Tolhurst brought the row into the House of Commons on Monday, telling minister Alok Sharma: "The proposed revised housing formula will add a further 8,000 homes to the current target of 30,000 which I believe is unsustainable and undeliverable without large investment in infrastructure.

"Will [Mr Sharma] agree to meet with me and Medway colleagues to look at this disproportionate burden on the Medway towns?"

The DCLG told us last week the proposals were not a local target, but would help make sure there's a clear and realistic assessment of how many new homes are needed.

Mr Sharma said in response: "Of course I will meet with Ms Tolhurst.

"I should just point out that Medway doesn't have an up-to-date plan in place at the moment and I would encourage them to respond to the consultation proposals that were set out."

Ferry guns not terror related

THE discovery of two handguns on board a ferry is not believed to be part of a terrorist plot.

Officers were called last Saturday morning after reports the weapons were found in a toilet bin on board the P&O vessel the Spirit of Britain shortly after it had arrived in the Port of Dover from Calais.

It is not yet clear how the guns passed through security. P&O says it is examining the cirumstances.

A police spokesman said: "The guns have been safely removed by police and an investigation has been launched."

Indian gets county award

THE Jumeira Restaurant in Staplehurst High Street has been voted the best Indian restaurant in Kent in the annual Curry Life Awards.

Founders of Jumeira, Tariq Ahmed and chef Abdul Munim Lodhi, picked up the coveted award in front of an audience of more than 600 people at a gala event in London's Royal Lancaster Hotel hosted by broadcaster, Michael Buerk in an awards which celebrates the industry.

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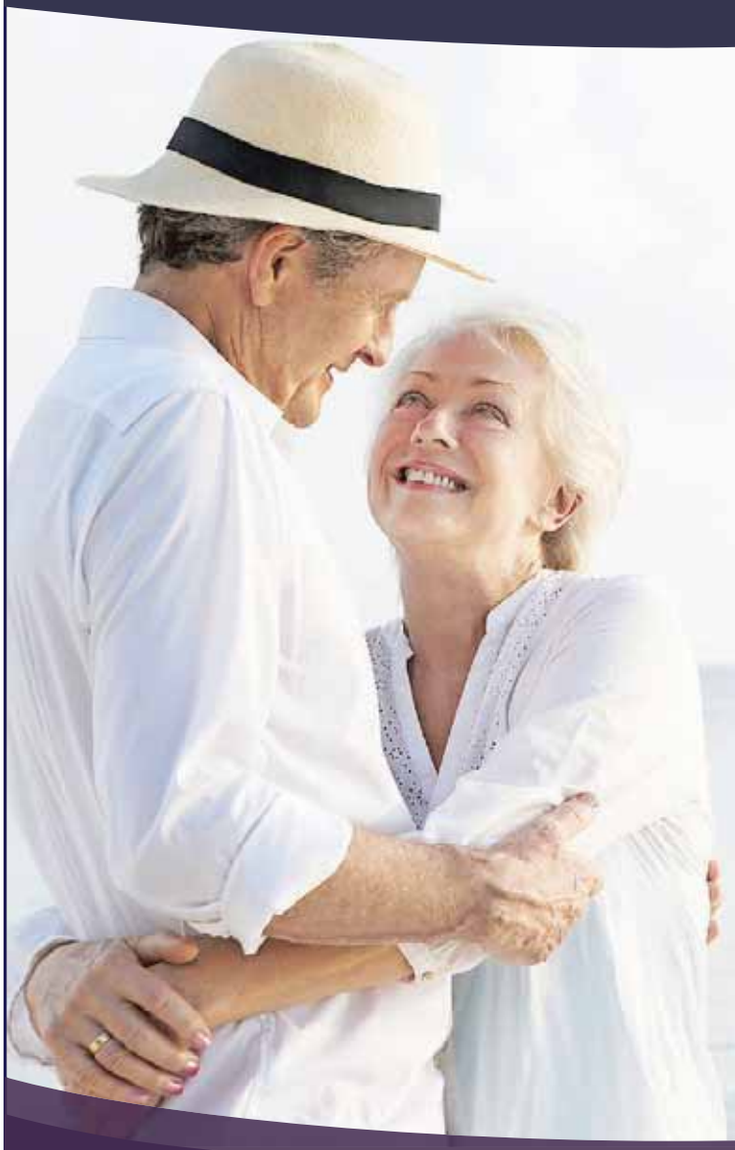

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Guilty of conning £12,500 out of Grenfell Tower relief fundraising

Trickster claimed his wife and son had been killed in the blaze. He even lined up to meet Prince Charles as a victim

CHEEK: Conman meets Prince Charles as the royal visits those caught up in the tragedy in west London

By Jack Hardy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

A SERIAL conman has admitted pretending his family died in the Grenfell Tower fire to obtain around £12,500 meant for the victims.

Anh Nhu Nguyen claimed his wife and son were killed in the June 14 disaster and was photographed beside the Prince of Wales when he met survivors.

As part of his deceit, Nguyen spun a cruel tale to family liasion officers, describing in detail how he lost sight of his family in the smoke-clogged stairwell, police said.

But while a major recovery operation was under way on June 15, the fraudster was actually nine miles away at a housing charity, according to prosecutors.

He posed as a victim of the blaze for almost two weeks and was given around £12,500 from charities and Kensington and Chelsea Council.

The 52-year-old, of Beckenham, pleaded guilty at Southwark Crown Court on Thursday to two counts of fraud by false representation and one count of making an untrue statement for the purpose of obtaining a passport.

The conviction comes amid fears that more people could have attempted to dishonestly profit from the tragedy.

The Metropolitan Police said in September they were investigating a series of other cases where individuals had fraudulently attempted to claim money.

Responding to Thursday's conviction, Elizabeth Campbell, leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council, called the behaviour "disgraceful".

She added: "We will continue to work with the police on any case like this that may emerge.

"I want to make it clear - if you are fraudulently claiming money that is for the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire, authorities will be tracking you, you will be found, and you will be prosecuted."

Nguyen showed no emotion as he entered his pleas through a translator.

He will be sentenced on December 15.

More than 80 people were killed in the blaze which devastated the 24-storey building, leaving scores of others homeless.

Nguyen had first visited to Westway Sports Centre four days after the blaze and was given a hotel room, clothing, food, electrical items and money after posing as one of the survivors.

He was discovered to be a fake when he gave several different flat numbers, some of which did not exist and one where a real victim lived.

Police said he claimed to have been treated at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington for smoke inhalation - but no record of his visit was found.

Judge Philip Bartle said at a previous hearing there was a "contemptible element" to the fraud.

He told the court: "This defendant succeeded in achieving money out of the misery and tragedy of people who, unlike this defendant if he pleads guilty, genuinely suffered by this terrible fire."

Nguyen was born in Vietnam, has been in the UK since the 1980s, is a British citizen and has 17 aliases.

He has 28 previous convictions for 56 offences spanning more than 30 years, including theft, dishonest offences, arson and grievous bodily harm.

Prosecutor Jonathan Polnay previously said: "He said he lost his wife, child and all his worldly possessions - he was given £100 cash and signed for it on that basis.

DISGRACE: Anh Nhu Nguyen

"He attended the following day and was given £260, then given accommodation at Holiday Inn Express, the current bill just under £2,000.

"On June 21 he applied for £5,000 and gave his address as flat 18 Grenfell Tower, but there is no flat 17 or 18.

"He then gave another address of another flat, there are other people who live in that flat who have confirmed that."

The family of the victim who lived at one of the addresses was caused "significant distress" after being questioned by police as a result of the fraud.

He was also convicted of lying to authorities that he lost his passport during the fire, in the name of Anh Tuan Nguyen.

Kate Mulholland, a specialist prosecutor from the Crown Prosecution Service, said: "Nguyen's deceit in the aftermath of such a catastrophic loss of life was breathtaking.

"He was willing to lie again and again, adapting his story when it was questioned, in order to profit from the huge aid efforts and outpouring of sympathy for true victims.

"At one point he claimed to have lived in a flat where the sole occupant had died. He also gave TV interviews in which he described the harrowing experience of escaping from the flat he had lived in for 20 years and losing his wife and son.

"CCTV showed that the day after the fire he was at a housing charity nine miles away in Whitechapel appearing happy and lighthearted and his mobile phone was located at his home in Beckenham.

"The selfishness and manipulation Nguyen showed has horrified those whose job it is to help the true victims of Grenfell Tower."

RIGHT ROYAL CON JOB

ANH Nhu Nguyen posed as a victim of the Grenfell Tower fire and shook the Prince of Wales' hand when he visited a relief centre set up in the wake of the disaster.

The 52-year-old was part of a crowd who flocked around Charles when he arrived at a memorial wall close to the tower for an unannounced visit, in the weeks after the fire.

Members of the public immediately clamoured around the prince as he gazed at the hundreds of bouquets, candles and cards laid in tribute for those who died, filming him on their phones and asking for selfies.

He shook hands with onlookers, chatting and posing for photos with some of them, before meeting staff at the nearby Westway Sports Centre where relief efforts were concentrated.

It is not clear whether Nguyen spoke with Charles directly, but he is pictured at his side and shaking his hand when the prince first arrived in north Kensington.

After the visit he told a reporter for the Press Association he had fled from the 15th floor of the burning high-rise with his wife and 12-year-old son.

Two days later, it emerged that Nguyen had been arrested on suspicion of fraud.

Nguyen, who was wearing a wristband that gave him access to the rest centre, appeared extremely distressed and agitated as he relayed his ordeal in broken English.

He claimed the fire had destroyed "everything" he owned, and that he was so upset about having lost his wife and son that he could not eat or concentrate.

Recounting his supposed escape, he said that the smoke became so thick he had to hold a wet towel out in front of him with both hands when he reached the eighth floor, and he became separated from his family.

He said there was so much smoke he could not see the lift, and later recalled seeing many dead bodies in the doorways.

After the fire, he said he spent two nights at the Westway centre on the floor with only a sheet and no mattress before being put in two nearby hotels.

He said he had lost his passport and ID in the fire, and that he was in contact with the authorities about trying to get family over from Hong Kong for his wife and son's funeral.

Campaigners step up pressure on gambling's 'crack cocaine'

A further consultation is under way over fixed odds betting terminals which allow players to gamble a staggering £100 every 20 seconds. But those fighting the machines say it should be reduced to just £2

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

THREAT: Campaigners believe FOBTs encourage problem gamblers - bookmakers say they may have to close stores if spending limits are slashed

PLANS to cut the maximum stake on controversial gambling machines don't go far enough, Kent campaigners claim.

Fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) - known as the crack cocaine of gambling - are said to be dangerously addictive and currently allow a stake of up to £100 every 20 seconds, allowing a player to theoretically gamble away £18,000 an hour.

In an announcement on Tuesday, the government said it would cut the maximum stake to between £50 and £2 as part of a package of measures in its gambling review.

However, many protesters criticised ministers for failing to fully commit to reducing the limit to £2, as a 12-week consultation into the proposals, which have been delayed in coming forward by the snap general election, was launched.

Leader of the opposition Labour group on Medway Council, Vince Maple, has long made the case for a severely reduced stake, previously dubbing the machines a "cancer on Medway's high streets".

Medway has been a particular problem area over the years, which led to the unitary council introducing a pioneering cross-operator self-exclusion scheme, since replicated by a number of local authorities nationwide.

He told KoS this week: "The fact that we are into yet another consultation is disappointing.

"But we may be getting close to a conclusion that I would like to see which is reducing the stake to £2 - that's an option which is not off the table.

"Over the next 12 weeks I will be doing everything I can, working with community activists and faith groups, to hammer home that this is the only solution.

"Reducing it to £50 would not make that much difference, which is why we need to reduce it to £2 and bring it in line with other machines in pubs and bingo halls."

Cllr Maple's frustration was shared by recovering gambling addict, Justyn Larcombe, from Tonbridge, who said the maximum stake "has to be £2, because if it's any more than that it won't stop the damage".

Mr Larcombe, who served in the British Army for almost nine years, said certain traits can make people more likely to become addicted.

"I think people with a certain personality trait may be more susceptible to this. People who perhaps like a bit of excitement - you know my military background, my parachuting, my commando course.

"I think people who are quite competitive by nature but perhaps not the best at losing, and people who are optimistic - those are the people for which gambling is quite dangerous.

"In the military and on the rugby pitch I was always taught never to give up, to find a way through. And when you realise that all of a sudden, you've lost money, it's hard for that kind of person, for me, to be able to let go of it and move on, which is what you need to do.

"And actually, it's what most people do when they bet - they just let go of their losses, they think, 'Oh that hurt, I'll move on'," he said.

He added that a problem gambler finds it very difficult to let go of their losses, but also finds it very hard to stop when they are winning because they believe that they are on a roll and can always win more.

"It stops being about the money, and it's more about the actual activity. So, for me, by the end, gambling was my escape. It was somewhere I went to run away from the destruction and chaos that I'd caused," he said.

"And the worst thing about the gambling addiction is the damage it does around you to the people you love the most.

"And I lost my family, and my home, and everything else, directly because of my actions in relation to gambling."

According to figures made available by campaign group Stop the FOBTs, there are 645 FOBTs across Kent and Medway, with punters around the county losing some £35m in 2016, and a staggering £234.2m on machines since 2008.

However, the Association of British Bookmakers has frequently dismissed criticism of the machines, pointing out there are now fewer betting shops than at any time since 2003, with the number of FOBTs also falling by 0.5 per cent in the past year.

It has also denied that FOBTs are more addictive than other forms of gambling.

A spokesman said this week: "This consultation sets out a number of proposals which we will consider and respond to.

"We believe the focus of any final decision should be to ensure measures are adopted that will be of genuine benefit to problem gamblers.

"Betting shops cater for over six million customers every year and the vast majority of them gamble responsibly.

"We know that most problem gamblers use seven or more different types of gambling products, therefore there is a challenge for the whole gambling industry to move from a position where there is a stable level of problem gambling in this country to one where problem gambling rates are decreasing.

"Betting shops are investing very significant sums of money to help identify those at risk so that they get the help that they need, we are continually updating and working to improve responsible gambling measures."

During a debate in the House of Commons this week, some MPs made the case that bookmakers provide significant employment and contribute to the economy, and warned of a detrimental impact.

Culture minister and Chatham and Aylesford MP Tracey Crouch, who made the announcement, told colleagues there could be a reduction in shops if stakes were reduced significantly in the future, adding that the changes could encourage a renewed focus from bookmakers on horse racing.

Cllr Maple said in response to the concerns: "I don't accept the argument that this will see hundreds of bookmakers shut across the county. As I've always said, I'm not anti-gambling, I'm anti-problem gambling.

"The final proof will be in the pudding in another 12 weeks, but as far as I'm concerned, every day we have these machines on our high streets is a day too long."

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KOS/15

Our only Labour MP on how her dream's come true with life at Westminster

She kept us waiting, but this week we headed to the Commons to meet Rosie Duffield - winner of the most remarkable of elections in Kent and the county's sole red representative in the chamber

By Tom Pyman

WHEN Hollywood actors take to an awards stage and claim they hadn't prepared a victory speech because they never expected to win, it's hard to accept it as genuine sincerity, rather than an attempt at modesty.

Yet when Rosie Duffield stepped into a largely-empty House of Commons just under five months ago to be officially sworn in as Canterbury's first ever Labour MP, she could be heard, courtesy of the chamber's many microphones, admitting she was "completely terrified".

Asked if she wanted to swear or affirm when taking the oath of allegiance to the Crown, she replied: "I'm happy to do the Bible bit, whichever that is".

This was clearly somebody just as surprised and shocked as everybody else in Kent, that she had successfully unseated Sir Julian Brazier, the Conservative stalwart of 30 years, against all odds.

"I had no idea that could be picked up, that was so embarrassing," she told KoS, burying her head in her hands, as we sat down this week at Westminster.

Arranging such an interview has not come without its challenges, and eleventh-hour cancellations, perhaps again symbolic of an MP taking a while to adjust to a life-changing new role - something she freely admits.

"On the night of the election, I stood thinking 'this is a bit of a practice and I'd really like to dent Julian Brazier's majority'.

"But throughout the day I was visiting polling stations and crazy things started happening.

"People wanted selfies with me and I was slightly mobbed wherever I went, which was odd because I've always sat on polling stations and helped out, and I thought 'what's going on? This is a bit strange'.

"But I probably didn't take it seriously until about 2.30am when we started getting the numbers in and it looked a lot closer than I thought.

"Even when it was announced I didn't believe it and we asked for a recount thinking it was the other way around.

DEFEATED: Rosie Duffield ended more than 30 years of Julian Brazier in the city

"I started seeing my name written down at various things with a badge and it said 'MP' and I thought 'oh, that's me.'

"It probably took four or five weeks until it really sank in. That sounds crazy but that's how it felt.

"But I got over that, and it's lovely being in that chamber. It's what I've dreamed of all my life and now I feel like I belong there a bit more."

Many analysts, including Sir Julian himself, attributed Ms Duffield's success to Labour policies on tuition fees and student debt, with the constituency served by three major universities.

The defeated Tory told us earlier in the summer the pledges were "a huge, huge bung" which "attracted a lot of naive young people who have not had to balance a budget before in their lives".

Rejecting the notion it was solely the youth vote that brought about her victory, Ms Duffield said: "That's really underestimating young people.

"If you speak to 10 or 20 or 30 students every one will come up with a different rea

son for voting.

"This assumption it was just about tuition fees and that it was a self-serving vote is really insulting.

"You talk to a student and they'll tell you there's so many issues - they're worried about their parents, their pension, whether they'll be able to afford a home and the NHS."

The health service is a particularly significant issue in her constituency, with the Kent & Canterbury Hospital suffering quite drastic cuts to services

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) controversially announced earlier this year that some 35 people who normally attend by ambulance every day with conditions such as heart attacks, strokes and pneumonia, would instead be diverted to the William Harvey in Ashford and the QEQM in Margate.

The changes, which health chiefs insist are only temporary, but have been in place since June, are the result of the trust struggling to recruit enough permanent consultants, though some vacancies have been filled in recent weeks.

Uncertainty has been further exacerbated by the departure of chief executive Matthew Kershaw in September, who left to take up a role at a think-tank.

Long-term, the trust wants to "reorganise" its services at the three hospitals and is set to bring proposals forward for public consultation in the spring.

Ms Duffield said: "We're in this weird limbo at the moment of desperately waiting to hear. Obviously all I want is a functioning hospital and an emergency department.

"People are desperate and very worried and suffering and we need that to stop. I'm making as much noise as I can, meeting with them a couple of times a week and bombarding them with letters we get from worried people.

"We need a solution that is going to last and actually solve problems and help people and the NHS have got to bear all that in mind. Let's see what they come up with."

Campaigners organised a public meeting last weekend where frustrations were vented and calls grew for a new hospital, after developer Quinn Estates announced earlier this year it was interested in replacing the existing hospital buildings with new ones.

However, the MP was controversially not told of developments by the Conservative leader of Canterbury City Council, Simon Cook, before they were revealed to the media.

"I've been apologised to but I didn't like the way it was announced in the papers, I thought that was quite bad manners," she said.

"I know other Kent MPs seemed to know more about it than I did as well, which is interesting."

Not since 2010 has the county had a Labour representative in parliament, and Ms Duffield claims she is in "a unique position" of having to work alongside her 16 Conservative neighbours - as well as Tory-controlled councils - while simultaneously fighting against a government she blames for "capping salaries and NHS cuts".

She said: "I regularly meet Helen

IMPRESSIVE: Rosie Duffield says she is determined to serve her constituents well - regardless of how they voted

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FIGHT: Kent & Canterbury Hospital is never far from the headlines

LEARNING: Rosie Duffield says it has been a steep learning curve since her election in June

Whately [Faversham and Mid Kent MP] for a chat to discuss local issues.

"It'd be stupid to cut myself off from those people, there's got to be things we can deal with on a cross-party footing, but of course it's tricky.

"I'll do my best but I need more Labour support in the county. We've shown it's possible now; other parts of Kent can get a Labour MP if they want to. It's not the case that we can write off the whole of Kent as Conservative.

"People are thinking about the policies, what do people stand for? Will the candidate make a good local MP? I want to be a good local MP to represent all the people, not just those who voted for me.

"People from a traditional Tory area are thinking again. It doesn't have to be that way, think outside the box, it can happen."

Already in her short tenure, Ms Duffield has faced challenges, being branded "hypocritical" for sending her two children to grammar schools, despite her party's well-documented opposition to the selective system.

Defending her stance, she claims her son asked eight years ago, when she was "not standing for public office or particularly politically active in the local area", if he could go to "the school with the climbing wall", which happened to be Simon Langton Boys.

Then over the weekend she was back in the headlines as it emerged she was paid £500 to appear on Russia Today, a state-funded TV station dubbed "Vladimir Putin's propaganda channel", which critics felt undermined her campaigning on LGBT issues, given the Kremlin's controversial stance on gay lifestyles.

"If anyone spends 20 minutes looking up on the register of interests, they'll find more Tory MPs that appear on that channel than anyone else," she said.

"The show I appeared on was a comedy show, it doesn't have a set of agendas that adhere to Putin's, whatever that might be.

"My LGBT record speaks for itself, and it upsets me that trolling websites that make up angles like that get to lead the agenda and right-wing newspapers will pick that up as news. It isn't, it's a distraction."

Despite the early obstacles she's had to face, Ms Duffield is clearly a popular figure already both in the constituency and in Westminster.

She was widely complimented on both sides of the house on her maiden speech, while closer to home, she received something of a rockstar's reception when she took to the stage at Canterbury's Pride event a few days after the election.

"It's so complicated. I'm having to learn every day," she admitted.

"Suddenly you have to cram all this knowledge in, it's good for the brain cells, I guess.

"You feel like you're getting to grips with it and then something else comes along, so it's a constant learning exercise, which is great and exciting.

"I'm never going to get bored doing this job or take it for granted. The minute I get complacent, I don't deserve the job anymore.

"I realise how fortunate I am, there's a lot of work to do, and I'm prepared to do it. What's not to love?"

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AMANDA, 36yrs, attractive lady. Solvent and well educated and spoken. Feminine figure with large breasts. Hoping to meet a broadminded gent, any age for discreet relationship. I don't mind if you are married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3035 Box: 429287**

TINA, 58yrs, slim, passionate and kind. Loves eating out. Hoping to meet gent 55-63. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429167**

VICTORIA, elegant smart black lady. 42yrs, loves life, gsoh, sexy in a sophisticated way. Looking to meet a chap of any age, must have GSOH. **Text Only. Box: 4084600**

JANE, 49yrs, own home, loves nature, artistic. Love to socialise. WLTM gent any age, must have GSOH. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429165**

JAMIMA, attractive, smart intelligent lady. 43yrs, brunette with striking green eyes. Hoping to meet a mature gent of older years. **Text Only. Box: 4036001**

VALERIE, caring thoughtful lady. Attractive with GSOH. Seeking similar gent. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429163**

SUSANNA, 42yrs, very attractive well groomed married lady. Works in London, can travel anywhere but cannot accommodate. If you are willing to meet on those terms contact me. **Text Only. Box: 4038007**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399**

CAROLINE, 42yrs, well educated, sophisticated "some call me posh" married lady, looking for no strings midweek liaisons. **Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box 427533**

HARRIETT 42yrs, blue eyed brunette with long lets and decent curves! Looking for a cheeky adventurous man for fun only. I live alone so can accommodate and can travel. Discretion assured. ACA. Give me a try. **Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 426205**

ATTRACTIVE lady, late sixties, hoping to meet a nice chap for walking, wining dining, and much much more. Age unimportant ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429161**

MONICA, strict german lady, 32yrs, wanting to meet a submissive, easygoing gent of any age. South East/London only pls. **Text Only. Box: 4079865**

ATTRACTIVE widow, 70s, solvent, fit and still attractive GSOH, hoping to meet a nice gent for days out, possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429159**

AISHA, petite Asian lady, just 23yrs, living at home but hoping to meet a sophisticated, well travelled man to teach me the ways of the world. Pls be discreet as my parents are very strict. **Text only. Box : 4003844**

KATHLEEN, attractive lady, 58yrs. Blue-eyed brunette with varied interests. I love life and want a nice gent to share it with me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429047**

TABITHA, attractive well groomed lady, 32yrs, own house, good job, hoping for some naught text chat with older gent. **Text Only. Box: 4028177**

SYLVIA, 44yrs, curvy busty build. Very respectful. Hoping to meet a good man to love. Call to hear more, I've lots to tell you. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429045**

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks no strings casual fun. I have my own house, car and am solvent. I'm busty with a firm figure. You must be open minded, age/status unimportant. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 427633**

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ATTRACTIVE lady, 56yrs. Slim, brunette who loves life. I'm very passionate and loving. Call me if you are interested. I will reply to all calls and texts. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429043**

MARIELLE, 45yrs, curvy attractive lady, likes older men. I'm married so you must be discreet. Lets meet up, and make each other smile again. Call me and lets get to know each other. **Tel: 0906 515 3039 Box: 426853**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 44yrs, easygoing, solvent with OHAC. If you are down to earth and loving call me. Age/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429041**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 70yrs young, slim, fit and young for my age. I'm hoping to meet a kind gent, must have GSOH, age/looks unimportant. Must be smart and good company. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429039**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715**

NANCY, 40 something years young. Attractive, fun loving and kind. Hoping to meet gent for trips, particularly around Cornwall which I love. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429037**

PAULINE, Sincere lady, 70s, GSOH, OH&C. Curvy with shoulder length dark hair. Varied interests, theatre and travel. WLTM similar minded gent. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428977**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375**

KATHERINE, 59yrs, slim, attractive petite lady, loves the countryside, happy with the simple things in life. Hoping to meet like-minded chap, any age. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428975**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3007 Box 422365**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 44yrs, loves life, just missing a down to earth man. ACA/Text answered, contact me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428973**

ATTRACTIVE lady, young looking 70s, retired nurse, hoping to find a nice gent for cinema, wining, dining, lives pleasures. I'm very kind and miss a mans pleasures. Please contact me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428971**

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SHEILA, 64yrs, attractive lady with blonde hair, varied interests and GSOH. WLTM interesting gent. Looks unimportant, must have GSOH. Call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428967**

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. **Tel: 0906 515 3035 Box 425979**

Men Seeking

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MALE, 5ft8, brown hair, blue eyes, new to Ashford, been here 3 years, OHOC, looking to get out and about again. Give me a call. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 429105**

HI I'm John, 65, 5ft11, medium build, N/S, driver, WLTM a lady to take out for meals, cinema, theatre and days out. It would just be nice to meet someone. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428991**

GOOD looking 31 year old male looking for a fun woman for no strings attached fun. Age and looks not a problem. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6103817**

MALE, modern dresser, likes driving to the coast and different places, looking for someone 60-70, possibly who can drive same as me, just to go out and enjoy life and have a laugh. It would be nice to have someone on my arm and to bring flowers to. Call me and let's have a chat. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428771**

MALE, 42, married and bored, looking for adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428599**

RICHARD, 55, looking for lady for outings, meals out, pubs etc. New to area and lonely. East Kent. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428631**

NICE looking male, 55, seeks mature female for fun, outings and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 334975**

SMART Thanet male, 70, dark hair, brown eyes, 5ft5, OHOC, likes travel, countryside, the sea, walking, looking for an attractive local lady, for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428303**

ATTRACTIVE male, dark hair, brown eyes, 5ft5, solvent, own bungalow and car, likes travel, countryside, seaside, walking, looking for attractive local lady for LTR. Thanet. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428127**

GENUINE retired, mature widower, honest, kind and considerate, enjoys most things, walking, countryside, seaside, seeking a lady for LTR, just wanting to share my life with somebody special. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428023**

SOLVENT male, older but young at heart, looking for a young lady to wine and dine and spoil and pamper and in turn to pamper me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427443**

MALE, 55, WLTM a lady, 60-70, for discreet adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428039**

BARRY, 50, 6ft 4ins, well built, divorced gent, looking to date calm and kind lovely lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421195**

SINGLE dad of two, WLTM a single mum, for a proper relationship. Please get in contact I look forward to hearing from you. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427999**

WELL off man, wanting a young lady for spoiling. I am a sugar daddy looking for a sugar baby. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427441**

JAMES, 43, genuine, witty, positive, kind and caring, loves travel, socialising, eating out and lots and lots of laughs with the right person, looking for genuine, friendly lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 428019**

MALE 60, 6ft, blue eyes, broad shoulders, size 11 shoes, a real handful! Seeks a fit mature busty woman for fun times. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6001755**

THANET male, retired, 5ft5, dark hair, smart, OHOC, likes walks, travel in motorhome, looking for a single, attractive lady with similar interests in Thanet. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427557**

TALL, lively old boy, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks tactile lady for company and jolly jaunts. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425021**

MALE, 58, slim build, 5ft9, brown eyes, hard working, enjoys fishing and socialising, looking for no stings attached fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427173**

CARING, sociable male, 72, N/S, likes all types of music, walking, meals out, looking for a lady for friendship at first. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426865**

KENT man, retired engineer, solvent, enjoys holidays, meals out, good conversation, WLTM a slim lady, 60-70, with a GSOH, to share these times and hopefully become friends. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426887**

MALE divorced, 6ft, well built, seeking fun time girl for good times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412717**

HARRY 50, ex soldier, 6ft, well built, seeking lady to wine and dine. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417015**

HI ladies, looking for either NSA fun or LTR. I am single/work/live in own house. **Text only. Mailbox: 4509325**

LOCAL man, seeks lady for friendship possibly more, for romantic dates and good times together, hope to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426195**

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DAMIAN, slim, fit, 56 bi male, looking for casual relationship with easygoing guy. Age unimportant. Can accommodate or travel. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6100311**

GAY male, 74yrs, sub, slim, seeks dom gay male, N/S, any age, for mutual enjoyment. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6078625**

MALE, 50s, likes to cross dress, looking for same for friendship and fun. Has to be discreet. **Text only Replies. Mailbox: 4623598**

JOHN, young at heart 65, bi male, looking for casual fun with likeminded male. Maidstone Kent area. Must be discreet. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5657306**

GAY guy, medium build, likes outdoors, DIY, seeking slim, N/S guy for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403267**

EASY going guy, 68, likes walks, books, seeks N/S guy for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411413**

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LOCAL 70 year old young male, now single, nice appearance and dresser, looking for fun and friendship with a lady, 55-70, possible holidays. Can travel. Please ring. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426897**

RETIRED, smart, 68 year old, 5ft5, I enjoy eating out, walking, holidays and golf, WLTM a slim, attractive lady, 60-68, for a loving, tender relationship, to enjoy these times with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421853**

LIVELY mature gent, OHAC, near sea in Folkestone, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks lady companion/lover, 58-68 yo. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422621**

50YR old divorced white male, passionate, strong, seeking caring lady for romantic, loving relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418641**

GUY, 50, 6ft tall, calm and kind, good company, seeking lovely lady for good times and fun and loving. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425369**

JERRY, 66, brown hair, brown eyes, recently widowed, love to walk my dog, WLTM compatible lady for companionship and to see where things go. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426387**

MALE, 55, looking for no strings attached friendship, with a lady 60-70, any status. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426133**

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Sleaze 'witch-hunt' must stop, insists MP as Commons rocked

It has been a traumatic week at Westminster - and some Kent MPs have found themselves at the very centre of claims and counter claims about their behaviour, with Sir Michael Fallon the big casualty

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

DARK: Westminster has had a long shadow cast over it this week while the likes of Damian Green, right, are forced to fight for their reputation amid claims about their behaviour.

SIR Roger Gale says he fears a "witch-hunt" against MPs, under fire following widespread allegations of sexual harassment, will deter young people from entering politics.

Westminster has been dominated by talk of scandal this week, with Kent MPs and ministers Damian Green and Sir Michael Fallon both at the heart of claims of inappropriate behaviour.

Sir Michael, who represents Sevenoaks, sensationally quit the front bench on Wednesday night, just days after he apologised after it emerged he touched the knee of a female journalist back in 2002. Meanwhile, the prime minister has ordered an investigation into reports her effective deputy, Ashford's Mr Green, made similar inappropriate advances to a female activist - allegations he strongly denies.

However, Thanet North MP Sir Roger told KoS the row was "heavily over-the-top" and that he feared budding politicans would be put off from embarking upon a career in parliament.

"It's getting to the stage where you can't do anything that's half-normal," he said.

"There was a time when I was a relatively attractive young man, and I attracted attention with it. I knew perfectly well as a single man I could flirt with a young woman.

"One would find it flattering and fun, another would say they're not interested. One woman's pleasure is another's poison. That's the nature of the human animal, that's why we pick mates.

"I have had, in my time, quite a few girlfriends, and then I found my wife who I love to bits. It was a process of selection.

"What worries me most is I look back and think would Roger Gale want to go into parliament as it is now? And I wouldn't. The media has one hell of a lot to answer for. This is not in the Harvey Weinstein league."

Labour has launched an independent inquiry into claims that prominent activist Bex Bailey was discouraged by a party official from reporting an alleged rape at a Labour event in 2011 on the grounds it might damage her political career.

And in a separate case, a woman who claims she was sexually assaulted by an MP on a foreign work trip last year has said her allegations were not taken seriously.

Sir Roger added: "If someone has attempted rape, the port of call for the person being assaulted is the police, and that is very serious.

"The idea you can say '10 years ago I met an MP and he had his hand on my knee and I was horrified; so horrified it took me 10 years to say anything' is rubbish.

"The flood of allegations could mask the serious cases that need investigation and I fear it's going to deter good, able men and women with talent, drive, commitment and determination from coming into the house.

"I am not saying all MPs are perfect, I'm not, none of us are. If you want nuns and monks elected, then elect nuns and monks.

"We have to get real and have a sense of proportion."

The county's newest MP, meanwhile, said she was quickly made aware of "lots of rumours" of sexual harassment around the Houses of Parliament after winning her seat over the summer.

Rosie Duffield was elected Labour MP for Canterbury back in June and claimed she hadn't witnessed any specific cases during her five months in Westminster, but that "there are always stories".

She told KoS: "I've only been here a few months, and I don't know personally that it's any worse than any other workplace I've been in.

"Every woman I know my age will have encountered some kind of harassment from very low level to something more troubling, and there are lots of rumours around here.

"I know people have been affected by things and I hope it does all get flushed out and dealt with in the right way.

"There are certain things people say and you think 'that's not very appropriate' but I hope people are learning a lesson and looking at themselves and realising they're going to be held to account.

"It's important staff at all levels feel safe and that they're going to be taken seriously and there's support. It's one thing being an MP, but if you work in a department, or for an MP, you should be able to speak out."

A so-called "dirty dossier" making a series of allegations against a number of MPs - including some from Kent - began doing the rounds as the week progressed, but much of the attention was on Mr Green.

Kate Maltby, who is three decades younger than the Ashford MP, told The Times that Mr Green had "fleetingly" touched her knee during a meeting in a Waterloo pub in 2015 and a year later sent her a "suggestive" text message after she was pictured wearing a corset in the newspaper.

Mr Green said any allegation that he made sexual advances to Ms Maltby was "untrue (and) deeply hurtful".

Ms Maltby, 31, said that 61-year-old Mr Green was an old friend of her parents who she had approached for advice after becoming involved in Tory activism.

When they met for drinks, she said he suggested could help her start a political career, before turning the conversation to the subject of affairs at Westminster.

Ms Maltby said that he mentioned that his own wife was "very understanding" and she then "felt a fleeting hand against my knee - so brief it was almost deniable".

Angered by the incident, she had no further contact with Mr Green until his text a year later saying he had "admired you in a corset" and inviting her for a drink.

Writing in The Times, she said she renewed contact with Mr Green after his appointment to the cabinet, but doubted he knew how "awkward, embarrassed and professionally compromised" she felt about the alleged incident.

Mr Green said it was "absolutely and completely untrue that I've ever made any sexual advances on Ms Maltby". His text was sent in the spirit of "two friends agreeing to meet up for a regular catch-up", he said, adding: "This untrue allegation has come as a complete shock and is deeply hurtful, especially from someone I considered a personal friend."

This week he instructed libel lawyers to examine the coverage he was receiving while saying he was prepared to publish the text messages involved in order to set the record straight.

However, in a turbulent week, reputations are being tarnished - for fact or fiction.

A list apparently drawn up by Tory whips was being widely circulated online detailing the names of a number of Tory MPs with various details.

However, there is no evidence for the vast majority of the claims - many of which appear to be vague and others detailing relationships with no suggestion of any wrong-doing morally or politically.

Yet at a time when the focus should be on Brexit, the eyes of the Westminster establishment have been drawn to the 'sleaze' allegations and, with Sir Michael Fallon's resignation, one which is claiming some significant scalps.

IS THIS END OF THE ROAD FOR FALLON ON FRONT BENCH?

WHILE the key focus of the national media's attention of this week's sleeze scandal targeted Damian Green, given his seniority in Theresa May's government, Sir Michael Fallon's decision to fall on his sword took many by surprise.

He started the week apologising publicly for touching the journalist Julia Hartley-Brewer's knee at an event 15 years ago.

And on Friday he faced allegations - which he denied - that he had spoken inappropriately to Commons leader Andrea Leadsom. There were also claims she had presented a dossier on his behaviour to the PM.

One of many MPs on the now notorious list circulated among Tory whips - which emerged in full unredacted versions online this week - his resignation letter to the prime minister addressed the allegations - and committed himself to continuing to serve as an MP for Sevenoaks.

He wrote: "A number of allegations have surfaced about MPs in recent days, including some about my previous conduct.

"Many of these have been false but I accept that in the past I have fallen below the high standards that we require of the armed forces that I have the honour to represent.

"I have reflected on my position and I am therefore resigning as defence secretary. It has been a privilege to have led defence over the past three and a half years.

"I have been fortunate in the opportunity to serve in the governments of four prime ministers, and to have played a part in education reform, including setting up Ofsted, the reduction of red tape for business, and the attraction of new investment into energy generation.

"I shall continue to support the government and to work hard for my Sevenoaks constituents."

In response, Theresa May said: "I appreciate the characteristically serious manner in which you have considered your position, and the particular example you wish to set to servicemen and women and others.

"You have combined [ministerial] roles with diligent service to the public in two constituencies - first in Darlington, and then in Sevenoaks - and I know you will continue to represent your constituents in that manner."

The irony of Sir Michael Fallon's downfall is that for so many years he has been seen as the solid, reliable figure of Conservative politics.

Yet after spending years commanding such a reputation in government, Sir Michael was ultimately undone by his long-trusted judgement.

The Tory MP entered office when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister in 1983 and held an array of ministerial positions under four Conservative leaders.

By the time David Cameron was in Downing Street, Sir Michael, now known for his composure under tough questioning, was routinely called upon to represent the Government for TV grillings.

His time as defence secretary was characterised by his role overseeing British military efforts against the Islamic State terror group in the Middle East, which helped lead to it being all but routed from Iraq and Syria by 2017.

But despite surviving the changing political tide over several decades, Sir Michael's fall from grace began when it was revealed he had touched the knee of a female journalist in 2002.

Like many prospective MPs, Mr Fallon got his first job in politics as a researcher for the Conservative party in the late 1970s.

In 1983, his stock had risen so much that he was selected to fight for a parliamentary seat during a by-election in Darlington, which he lost to Labour's Oswald O'Brien.

A general election lurked round the corner, however, allowing Sir Michael to secure the seat by 3,438 votes just 77 days later, on June 9 1983.

After holding the seat in the 1987 election, he was made parliamentary private secretary to the energy secretary Cecil Parkinson and became Margaret Thatcher's assistant whip the following year.

As pressure mounted on the Iron Lady to resign in 1990, Sir Michael joined a small cadre of supporters including Michael Portillo to visit the embattled PM.

He attempted to persuade the

Ministry of Defence

Dear Prime Minister,

OFF: Michael Fallon's resignation letter to the PM as he quit as defence secretary.

SPLIT: The PM and Sir Michael Fallon had long been allies.

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long-time Tory leader to remain.

She later wrote of the encounter: "They arrived about midnight and tried in vain to convince me that all was not lost ... I said that I would sleep on my own resignation, as I always did with important matters, before making my final decision; but it would be very difficult to prevail if the cabinet did not have their hearts in the campaign."

Sir Michael spent time in the political wilderness after a 1992 election defeat - returning at Sevenoaks as the Conservatives were cast from government in 1997. He assumed the position as the town's MP in one of the nation's safest Tory seats following the decision by former MP Mark Wolfson to retire after 18 years at Westminster.

At this June's election, he increased his share of the vote to 63.7 per cent.

By the time the Tories had returned to power in a coalition government in 2010, he had climbed to the senior party ranks and was appointed deputy chairman.

The veteran MP then jumped between several ministerial posts under Mr Cameron until he was handed the defence brief in 2014, which he held through two chaotic elections and the EU Referendum.

Then, last month, allegations of sexual impropriety in public life began to gather momentum after Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was accused of being a prolific sex attacker.

DEFENCE: Sir Michael Fallon was this week replaced in the cabinet

KNEE: Julia Hartley-Brewer says incident had been forgotten

The scandal eventually engulfed Westminster and it emerged Sir Michael had touched journalist Julia Hartley-Brewer's knee during a dinner 15 years earlier.

Despite the journalist brushing it off as "mildly amusing", Sir Michael was forced to apologise and announced his resignation days later.

Sir Michael's local party said it supports him continuing as MP for Sevenoaks, the seat he has represented since 1997.

Sevenoaks Conservatives chairman Graham Clack said: "He's been a fantastic local MP and he will carry on being our fantastic local constituency MP. Nothing changes on that."

So what now for such a once reliable politician? His resignation raises some important questions - none more so than for the prime minister, who has lost one of her most trusted allies in the cabinet.

As the PM announced a cabinet reshuffle following the humiliating general election result, Sir Michael was one of the first ministers to retain his secretary of state position.

And it seems Sir Michael's advice as one of the most senior members of government was valued by Mrs May. After the general election swept Mrs May's Commons majority away, he disclosed that senior ministers had confronted the PM and told her she had to change the way she operates and adopt a more collective approach.

At what is a testing time for Mrs May, with Brexit negotiations front and centre of many minds, Sir Michael's opinions and backing will likely be missed by the PM.

So where does it leave the Sevenoaks MP now?

With two stints in the House of Commons spanning nearly 30 years and high-level roles both within the Conservative party and in Government, Sir Michael had firmly established himself as a key player at Westminster.

He had served as defence secretary since July 2014 when he was appointed by then-PM David Cameron and remained in post when Mrs May took the keys to Number 10.

This followed a stint as deputy chairman of the Conservative Party from September 2010 to September 2012.

Sir Michael may have bounced back before - an election defeat in Darlington in 1992 was followed by a return to the Commons in 1997 - but few would expect him to return to the top table after becoming the Westminster sex scandal's first major scalp.

However, he is credited for a significant transformation of defence, which raises the issue of what does this all mean for the forthcoming defence spending review?

The UK is a rare breed among Nato members - it spends two per cent of GDP on defence and the amount has increased over recent years.

As Sir Michael told the Commons last month: "The defence budget was £34 billion when I became defence secretary. It's £36bn today and it's going to reach £40bn by 2020.

"But the National Audit Office warned in January that defence staff must find nearly £6 billion of additional savings or officials will be forced to cut or delay plans for new tanks and aircraft.

It said the risks to the affordability of the Ministry of Defence's 10-year spending plan were greater than at any point since its introduction in 2012.

Sir Michael was widely considered to be well across his brief and was working hard to ensure military spending was sustained when he resigned his post.

As speculation mounts about where the cloth will be cut - with rumours including spending cuts to the marines or warships - Sir Michael continued to place pressure on chancellor Philip Hammond ahead of his financial statement this month.

Whether Sir Michael's successor will be able to continue this remains to be seen.

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Campaign to protect Goodwin Sands gets historic key backing

As Dover Harbour Board continues to seek permission to dredge the sands, its hopes may have just received a blow

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

THE fight to save the Goodwin Sands from being dredged to provide material for Dover docks' expansion has been given a major boost after receiving the backing of Historic England.

The public body, largely funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, says it is opposed to the dredging of the famous shallow 10-mile long sand bank which is six miles off the coast of Deal.

It is the graveyard for numerous shipwrecks over the centuries.

Dover Harbour Board wants to take some 2.5 million cubic metres of sand - which it insists amounts to a tiny fraction of the sands - to help its ambitious multi-million pound Dover Western Docks revival project.

But it has faced opposition from the group Goodwin Sands SOS (Save our Sands) which insists any work on the area will disturb the natural environment - seals are often sighted on the sands - and the graves of thousands of mariners and war victims.

Due to the wrangle, Dover Harbour Board has started dredging elsewhere to ensure work on its project - which it says will boost the local economy and create jobs - keeps on track. But that it is still eyeing the potential of the Goodwins.

Campaign leader Joanna Thomson explains: "Area 501 is a newly licensed dredging site located in the outer Thames Estuary, some 41 nautical miles from Dover, which is well within the industry norm in terms of distance from site to wharf.

"However, DHB claim it is unviable to extract the whole 2.5 million. The reality is, that for some reason, DHB were so confident in assuming the dredging licence application would be a 'shoe in' that they did not have a contingency budget in place.

"We have wanted the backing of Historic England for some time, but they have been prevaricating, but finally they have come to a decision that is music to our ears."

The Dover Harbour Board marine licence dredging application is currently with the Marine Management Organisation for a final decision.

But it has now sent its responses from its primary advisors on the public register to the campaigners.

Ms Thomson said: "Historic England has recommended the MMO do not grant the marine licence on the grounds that the risks to the known and unknown historic environment are not adequately addressed in the present application.

"This objection comes after seven local town and parish councils all voted to object to the dredging, following presentations by both Dover Harbour Board and Goodwin Sands SOS."

Among those to also voice concerns are the Kent Wildlife Trust, Thanet Fishermen's Association and British Sub Aqua Club.

Ms Thomson said: "Natural England has given a guarded response, which is currently being challenged by Goodwin Sands SOS.

WILDLIFE: Seals are regularly spotted on the sands

"They omitted to respond on two important factors - the conflict of the rescheduled dredging timetable with the seals' moulting, breeding and pupping seasons and the absence of a one kilometre exclusion zone around the haul-out site at Trinity Bay.

"This exclusion zone would render the north half of the dredging zone unusable, which probably is why Dover Harbour Board has downplayed its significance."

The public responses from several consultations will be published on the MMO's public register in due course.

Meanwhile, Ms Thomson said: "As you would expect, we are delighted that Historic England have so firmly called for the licence application to be rejected. We have said all along that the proposed dredging presents a significant risk to the unknown historic environment, so it is very reassuring to have our fears justified by Historic England, who are obviously the experts in such matters."

SUPPORT: There are a growing number of people who believe the sands should be left untouched

TRANQUIL: At low tide the sands are revealed in their desolate beauty

From its report, Historic England said: "Our advice is we recommend that you do not issue a marine licence for this proposed project as there are important matters regarding risk to the known and unknown historic environment that are not adequately addressed in the present application."

And their report goes on: "Since dredging last occurred in 1998 on the Goodwin Sands, the legislation and policy that regulates and directs both the aggregate dredging industry and care for the marine historic environment has changed substantially. From our review of the evidence presented within this application a clear assessment of risk has not been sufficiently demonstrated."

And on the reduced volume now intended to be taken, it said "the risk still exists that the proposed dredge programme could encounter presently unknown archaeological materials".

In conclusion, it said: "The sedimentary dynamic conditions of the Goodwin Sands are unique in comparison with other active marine minerals licensed dredging areas and that proportionately the risk to encountering previously unknown features of archaeological interest is readily apparent.

"The test of alternative dredging locations appears seems to have given limited attention to the full range of historic seascape character.

"The apparent dynamic nature of the Goodwin Sands will make establishing baseline conditions for the purposes of monitoring very problematic.

"We therefore consider it necessary that this proposed project should now take all necessary steps to balance the commercial and operational needs of the project with the evident risks involved with dredging in such a dynamic sedimentary environment as the south Goodwin Sands."

Ms Thomson said also opposed to the planned dredging are the local town councils, Thanet North MP Sir Roger Gale, the joint nautical archaeology policy committee, and the Zoological Society of London.

Dover Harbour says it is creating 600 jobs but needs the aggregate from the sands to help relocate its cargo area to a new terminal at the Western Docks. The sand will be used for both land reclamation and the construction works. The effect of this will also create extra space within its Eastern Docks for ferry traffic.

Also being built would be shops, hotels and bars and a new marina.

Dover port reiterated it only plans to remove a small proportion of the Sands for the Dover Western Dock Revival - just 0.22 per cent of the total volume leaving over 99.7 per cent which means there would be no coastal impact.

It added that all known military sites have been identified and avoided.

A Port of Dover spokesman said: "We are, of course, aware of Historic England's extensive response to the public consultation. We understand that the MMO is currently reviewing all of the representations made."

The dredging proposals has also attracted strong opposition from renowned actors Mark Rylance and Miriam Margolyes, as well as author Deborah Moggach, and marine and coastal ecologist Maya Plass.

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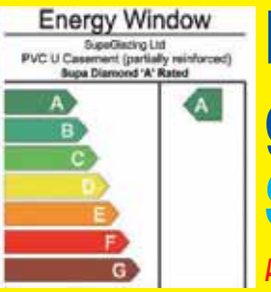

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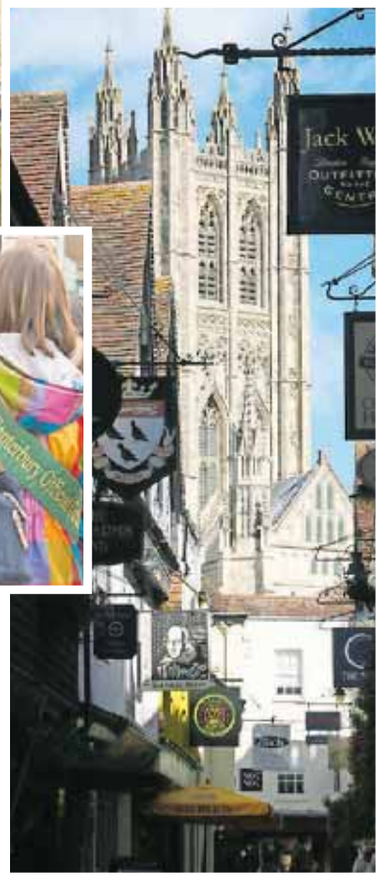

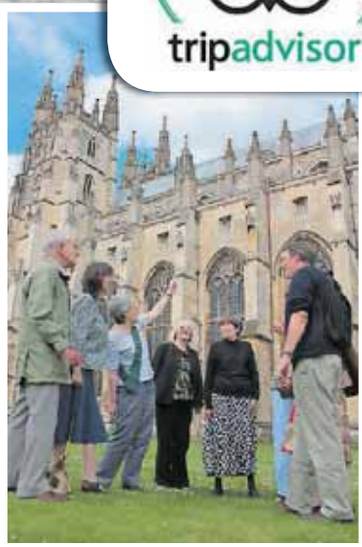

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Complex decision edges closer

SENIOR officials at Canterbury City Council are sifting through piles of responses to a public consultation on a site which could become one of its major entertainment hubs.

Developer Linkcity has submitted an application to build at the former council-owned Serco depot and coach park in Kingsmead, as well as other adjacent pieces of land.

Subject to planning permission, the leisure-led scheme known as Canterbury Riverside will create 80 new full time equivalent jobs and deliver a five or six-screen cinema, eight commercial units for cafes, bars and restaurants, a small convenience store and two smaller shops and a public square to host events and cultural activities.

It also aims to create 189 homes, 484 purpose-built student bedrooms, a new boat house and pontoon, an extension of the riverside pathway and improved access to the river and an undercroft car park and parking for bikes across the site.

Now the public consultation is taking place in order to gauge reaction to the scheme.

Chairman of the council's regeneration and property committee, Ben Fitter-Harding, said: "Kingsmead is the last large development site in Canterbury.

FUTURE: How the Kingsmead development could look.

"Bringing the area back to life is a priority for us, because it has been run down for some time and an eyesore for people living nearby.

"We want to repay their patience by making it vibrant once again, so it's great to have reached this important milestone of the planning application being submitted.

"The project stretches back to the original Kingsmead development brief of 2004, and since then we have worked really hard to get to this point.

"There has been lots of pre-planning public consultation in the last couple of years as the plans have been put together and we know there is plenty of support for the project.

"If this scheme is granted planning permission, it represents a brilliant opportunity for us to attract visitors and shoppers and persuade them to stay in the city for longer.

"Businesses in Northgate should really benefit too, as footfall between Canterbury Riverside and the city centre is likely to be high.

"It would also mean residents will no longer need to travel to Westwood Cross, Ashford or Maidstone to enjoy a multi-screen cinema experience.

"At the moment, we only retain 39 per cent of the potential cinema audience."

Some people have recently questioned the need for more purpose-built student accommodation in the city, but Cllr Fitter-Harding said it is an important way to improve the number of affordable family homes in the district.

He said: "At the moment purpose-built student accommodation is home to 45 per cent of the 30,000 students studying in the city.

"Because Canterbury is a desirable place to live and the demand caused by the need to house students, buying and renting property is more expensive than in the rest of east Kent.

"Affordability is a keen concern of new and existing residents and this is one of the many ways we can tackle it."

Demolition crews are pulling down the some of the existing buildings for public safety reasons.

This work is required regardless of the outcome of the planning process.

A spokesman for the city council added: "The consultation is open, and officers are now looking through responses at the moment and a report will go to committee in due course."

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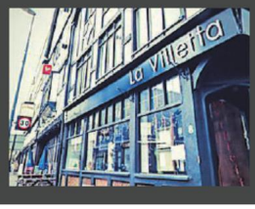

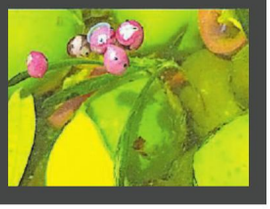

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How to get into the spirit of the festive season with a host of gifts all set to put sparkle in your life

For many, there is just one pay-day left until Christmas - which means the focus must turn now to just what to get your nearest and dearest. And have you ever considered eating out on Christmas Day?

EVERYBODY loves a festive-themed novelty gift - and if you're after something drinkable to help get you into the Yuletide spirit, there are plenty of options out there.

We sent Santa's little helpers to find the best boozy baubles, crackers and advent calendars to pop, pull and 'gin-gle' all the way with (because we might now have grown-up tastes, but we're still kids at heart when it comes to Christmas).

Here are 9 of the best boozy baubles, crackers and advent calendars.

1. The Perfect Measure Baubles Mixed Pack of 3, £27.95, The Whisky Exchange available from November 6; thewhiskyexchange.com

An unholy trio of gin, single malts, world whiskies or rums (the fastest trending spirit), each glass bauble in this minimalist pack is filled with just the right measure of your favourite tipple, perfectly packaged and ready to pour. Also available as one individually boxed bauble (£9.95) if you need a stocking-filler for a vodka lover.

2. Pickering's Gin Christmas Baubles 6 Pack, £29.95, 31dover.com

Putting the 'Cheers!' into Christmas decorating, these candy-coloured baubles will spruce up your fir tree a treat. Each one is filled with 50ml of Pickering's Gin, and as the lads at the distillery like to say: "Let the festivities be-gin!"

3. Moet & Chandon Brut Imperial Champagne Christmas Cracker, £19.99, Selfridges

Why not go for gold and crown the day with the best-loved bubbles in the world? The champagne in the baby 20cl bottle is bursting with pristine fruit and citrusy aromas.

4. Perfect Measure Drinks Christmas Crackers, £49.95 for box of 6 , The Whisky Exchange

Bright and cheerful, red is always a winner at the festive table, especially in the form of these jazzy crackers. Containing miniature spirits, such as Whitley Neill Gin, Copper Dog Blended Malt and Mahiki Coconut Rum Liqueur, there'll be no 'bad jokes' when these beauties are pulled.

5. Christmas Spirits Crackers, £70 for box of 6, Fortnum & Mason

The carefree caricatures adoring these gold and silver crackers certainly look in good spirits, so why not join the party? With an entertaining line-up of Hendrick's Gin, Sailor Jerry Rum, Glenfiddich 15-year-old and Monkey Shoulder among the headliners, they're bound to please.

6. Wine Advent Calendar, £69.99, Laithwaites.co.uk

The 24 wines in this grown-up advent calendar might be under wraps (or behind windows, rather), but rest assured, the folks at Laithwaite's will have made sure each miniature bottle of white or red is delicious to the last drop.

7. Drinks By The Dram That Boutique-y Gin Company's Advent Calendar, currently £99.95, Amazon

Celebrate Happy Hour every day with this five-star cocktail lover's calendar. Behind each of the 24 windows is a 30ml bottle of gin you can shake, muddle or stir into your favourite serve. Lovely packaging, too.

8. The Pip Stop Superstar Sparkling Advent Calendar, £125, thepipstop.co.uk

Fresh and elegant with plenty of finesse, this is the ultimate choice for anyone who loves a glass of bubbly, be it prosecco, cava or champagne. Absolutely fabulous and lots of fun, why not give the gift of effervescence?

9. Chase Distillery Advent Calendar, £140, Chase Distillery (williamschase.co.uk)

As if you needed 24 reasons to enjoy their liquid assets, this box of goodies contains 14 of Chase's most prized products. With something for everyone, friends and family can count down to Christmas Day with Chase Vodka, Marmalade Vodka and even Rhubarb Vodka, while Williams Elegant Gin and Pink Grapefruit Gin could also help those merry bells ring out...

CHRISTMAS DAY IN A RESTAURANT - IS IT FOR YOU?

FUN: Just imagine having no peeling or washing up to do...

FOR some people, the preparation of the Christmas Day meal is one of the highlights of the year. For others a chore which takes the shine off the festivities.

Certainly there's no denying that while some relish peeling sprouts and preparing gravy, others fret at the very thought of it.

And if you're entertaining lots of people such mass catering can be a job of gigantic proportions.

So an increasing number of people are looking to take the stress and strain out of the big day itself - as well as saving on the washing up - by taking themselves off to a restuarant.

Admittedly, not all eateries will be open on December 25 - but plenty will be. So what are the pros and cons?

Firstly, one drawback is that you will be paying extra for the chance to pull a cracker while someone else serves you up your food.

It's not cashing in for the sake of it, but you can imagine that getting staff to work on such a special day does not come cheap. Thus the additional staffing costs get passed on to the diner - and that can see prices rocket.

Secondly, you will miss out on the all the plaudits of preparing something home-cooked and creating that memory in your home.

But if you can live with that - or feel confident a prepared meal out is likely to trump your culinary skills anyway, eating out makes a whole lot of sense.

Most restaurants will serve up fixed menus - classic festive fayre which will take the sting out of the stuffing and the pain out of all that peeling.

And as you're waited on, you can really let your hair down in style.

And who knows, after trying it once, you may find it writes a chapter in your family's festive traditions.

Contact your favourite restaurant to find out if they'll be serving up on the big day and treat yourself to a table.

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LEGENDARY: Bagpuss is appearing at Sissinghurst Castle from this month until February 4. Picture: ADY KERRY

Celebrating the legacy of Smallfilms and all its magic

Sissinghurst Castle is set to host a very special exhibition for the child in all of us

FOR those of a certain age, their childhood's exposure to popular culture will have been defined by the work of two men.

Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate allowed their fertile imaginations to create some of the nation's best-loved and most fondly remembered creations - and many of which were created right here in Kent.

And now the fruits of their productive partnership will be on display at Sissinghurst Castle as part of a touring exhibition by the V&A Museum of Childhood.

Clangers, Bagpuss & Co brings together some of those memorable creations which emerged out of the duo's Smallfilms production house.

Ivor the Engine, Noggin the Nog and Pogles Wood are all part of the collection which will be on display at Sissinghurst from November 11 to February 4.

Oliver Postgate's voice and Peter Firmin's puppets and artwork are cornerstones of 20th century British culture and their quirky and inventive programmes shaped the childhood memories of millions. As well as telling the story of Bagpuss and The Clangers, the exhibition goes behind the scenes of some of their other creations: Pogles Wood, Noggin the Nog and Ivor the Engine.

From Watch with Mother in the 1960s to 21st century CBeebies, Smallfilm's endearing characters and captivating imaginary worlds have been staples of children's television across the globe. The Clangers returned to the small screen in 2015 and have been embraced by a new generation of fans.

Before the days of CGI, Smallfilms used detailed craftsmanship and bold ingenuity to create enchanting animations. Working in a barn and an adapted pigsty in a village just outside Canterbury, the pair were able to maintain their creative independence and uniqueness of vision.

The exhibition brings together the original puppets alongside archive footage, sets and storyboards, photos, scripts and filming equipment, all set in a playful recreation of Oliver and Peter's film studio.

Alice Sage, curator of the exhibition, said: "We all hold a special place in our hearts for one or more of Smallfilms' creations. Beyond telling marvellous, captivating stories, Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate's work encouraged children to look at the world with curiosity. Oliver's distinctive voice as narrator never spoke down to their young audience, and they weren't afraid of dealing with complex ideas in a magical way. The stories have stood the test of time.

"As well as looking at how these programmes were made, we also hope to capture the spirit of these timeless gems."

Visitors can see Oliver Postgate's stop-motion film camera, adapted using a small motor and bits of Meccano, learn why Bagpuss changed from orange to pink, and find out what Major Clanger was really saying from original shooting scripts.

They can also try their hand at animating the characters using current technology.

The exhibition is open everyday, except December 24 and 25 and runs from 11am to 4pm.

» Email us details of your event to:
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Get creative with gift ideas at Crafts for Christmas in Detling

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

LOOKING for something a little different this Christmas? Then an event taking place this weekend in Detling may spark some ideas.

The Crafts for Christmas event runs until Sunday in the Maidstone Hall of the Kent County Showground and brings talented makers and designers from all over the UK to showcase their wares.

In addition, there will be a host of local producers catering for all tastes.

Events taking place include a signing session by the author Terry Ward, and Rolvenden-based Farnell Farm with its range of Kentish cobnuts and bluebell seeds.

In addition, also exhibiting will be the Sock Company Country, jewellers Ashtique and clothing brand Trinity Urban.

Bio Farm Trading will brings its ceramics and olive wood kitchenware, Murano glass from Italy and Swarovski jewellery will be on show from Perlina di Murano and Bomboniere by Manancour will be showcasing its table decorations.

EVENTS: There's lots to see and do at the Kent Showground this very weekend

There will even be luxury fruit-infused alcoholic spirits courtesy of Kentish Tipple.

A spokesman for the event explained: "Crafts for Christmas is brimming with festive delights and unusual ideas to solve even the most difficult relative on the Christmas list.

"You can treat yourself, family and friends to an abundance of exciting gifts including stunning fashions and accessories, leather bags and belts, dazzling jewellery from sparkly fashion to graceful diamonds, lustrous scarves and luxurious skincare, over 85 stands fill this new state of the art hall.

"Fill your festive cupboard with scrumptious cakes, wines, fruit liqueurs from Nip from the Hip, cheeses from Lymm Bank Farm, olives, meats from Grasmere Farm and preserves from the Victorian Kitchen.

"New this year we present workshops and demonstrations of cake decorating by Iced Yorkshire, while the Pressed Flower Guild will be holding workshops for you to make cards while This Art of Mine have festive workshops in felting and knitting."

The event runs until 5pm on Saturday and then from 9am to 4pm today (Sunday).

Love Island duo switch on

GABBY and Marcel from Love Island will join X Factor's Lemonade at the switching on of the Christmas lights at Westwood Cross on November 17. Entertainment starts at 4pm with lights on at 6pm.

Artistic postcards pop up

A POP-up postcard exhibition takes place on November 18 at St George's Hall in Deal.

Work on display, created by South East Artists, will all be framed and available to purchase for £20.

Entry is free, with doors open from 10am to 5pm.

King of Pop tribute act

TRIBUTE act Jackson Live in Concert will aim to recreate the magic of the King of Pop Michael Jackson at Chatham's Central Theatre on November 10. Featuring Ben and his band, tickets are on sale now.

Free jazz in Knockholt

JAZZ fans can enjoy the Roger Beajolais Quartet at The Three Horseshoes in Knockholt, near Sevenoaks, later this month.

The band will be performing at the pub on Tuesday, November 14.

Tickets for the show, which runs from 8pm to 10.30pm are free.

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Lee Child book signing

BESTSELLING author Lee Child will be meeting fans and signing copies of his latest book The Midnight Line at Waterstones in the Bluewater complex from 1pm on Monday, November 13.

Austen birthday lecture

PROFESSOR John Mullan will be giving a special address to mark Jane Austen's birthday this Decemeber in Tonbridge.

He will address an audience on December 13 at the Church of St Peter and Paul between 2.30pm and 4.30pm. Tickets cost £6 and are on sale now.

Simulating Sinatra show

LEADING Frank Sinatra tribute act Frankly Sinatra performs tonight at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley - recreating the magic of Ol' Blue Eyes.

Featuring Stephen Triffitt as the man himself, it starts at 8pm.

Becket back in Canterbury

A THEATRICAL production of the life of Thomas Becket will takes place at Eastbridge Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr - built to provide hospitality for pilgrims to Becket's tomb - later this month.

This Turbulent Priest runs from November 25 to December 29. Tickets on the door only.

Prince exhibition is key reminder of talent lost

REVIEW: By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

WHEN Prince passed away last year, it brought to an end the life of an artist who managed to live depicted in a way he always dictated.

From the writing, performance and production of his music to his clothing and live performances, there was never any doubt he was in control.

He turned himself and his life into a canvas - painting upon it an image he wanted to portray to the world at all times. Try finding a picture of him lounging about in a pair of jeans or some Crocs in his downtime and you'll be reliant on someone with some Photoshop skills.

Thus, releases and events subsequent to his passing retell his story through the eyes of others - something he was so opposed to in life.

My Name Is Prince - an exhibition running at the O2 in Greenwich - is perhaps the most notable example of that. A celebration of his life and career, it features instruments and clothing from his earliest shows all the way through to the Prince and a Microphone tour which he was midway through on at the time of his death.

With Gracelands, the firm which runs Elvis Presley's former home, now in charge at Prince's cherished Paisley Park recording complex and home in Minneapolis, they are also running this event...obvious by the fact an Elvis exhibition will run alongside it, starting next week.

And while a little light on detail, there is plenty to see here. Some iconic outfits - such as that worn in the movie Purple Rain and the cloud suit from the Raspberry Beret video among many others.

With his trademark symbol supporting the main display, you would be hard pushed not to feel the pain of his loss all over again as you revel in his very special talent. Would he have approved it? Probably not, but he would have to begrudgingly respect they'd done a good job. Go see it.

My Name Is Prince runs athe O2 until January 7. Tickets cost £25.

VENUE: Prince performed 21 nights at the O2 in 2007

RETURN: The exhibition has been extended to January 7

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Dawn French reflects on life as she hits big 6-0

Comedy star for decades, her new book offers pearls of wisdom as she reflects upon her colourful life

SHE's among our best-loved comedy actresses, star of The Vicar of Dibley, one half of comedy duo French and Saunders, acclaimed author and chocolate-loving national treasure.

Much of Dawn French's work has been drawn from her own life - her 2008 autobiography Dear Fatty and recent solo show Thirty Million Minutes chart both her triumphs and her tragedies. Her latest book Me. You. A Diary reveals what she has learned in her 60 years and features blank pages for the reader to include his or her own entries.

It's a mellow, gentle read with a lot of words of wisdom, as Dawn looks back on how she has acted and reacted to different events in her life, how her priorities have changed and how, as her mother used to say, 'We don't do perfect'. Remarkably, she turned 60 last month.

It's clear that family means everything to Dawn, who has an adopted daughter Billie with her ex-husband Sir Lenny Henry - who she remains on good terms with - and has gained two stepchildren through her second marriage to Mark Bignall, who runs a drugs rehabilitation charity. They live in Cornwall.

Yet she guards her family's privacy like a tigress, both in the book and in person. It must have been difficult to write about her own life without including them in it.

"I'm a bit of a contradiction in terms," she admits. "I've had my loss, I've had my joys, and all kinds of ups and downs, like everyone - but I've found that by telling my story honestly, that connects me to the readers, and the audience to my show. It's who I am. That doesn't mean to say I'm not private - there's plenty that's not in the book."

STAR: From Comic Strip to Vicar of Dibley, Dawn is a national treasure

She doesn't mention Mark by name in the diary and steers clear of much detail on other family members.

"None of these people have asked to be part of this," she explains. "This is my life and my choices, so I have to be careful about that. My own daughter doesn't want to be in it because she's very shy."

Is marriage different second time around?

"Yes, because the person is different and so the mixture is different. There's chemistry that's entirely different and all the more interesting for that. When you get married when you're young, you don't even think about the future, you just trundle on. I'm very aware that when you get married in your 50s, you must savour every minute, have a bit of a shorthand and cut through the crap a bit quicker."

The career is still going strong - she is currently filming the second series of Delicious for Sky 1 and working on a French and Saunders 30th anniversary Christmas special "basically a clip show" she explains.

Me. You. A Diary by Dawn French is published by Michael Joseph, priced £20. Available now.

Fat fun at hit musical

THE star-studded cast of Fat Friends the Musical will come to Dartford's Orchard Theatre from April 9-14.

Featuring the likes of Freddie Flintoff, Sam Bailey, Natalie Anderson and Natasha Hamilton, the show is written and directed by the award-winning Kay Mellor with original music from Nicholas Lloyd Webber - son of the legendary Andrew.

Tickets for the show are on sale now.

Celebrating Bowie

A SPECIAL tribute night to the late David Bowie takes place at Tunbridge Wells' The Forum to mark the second anniversary of his death.

Bowie Night - A Celebration takes place at the venue on January 6 and promises a host of special guest appearances.

Monies from the event will go to the music charity Rhythmix. Tickets cost £10 and are on sale now.

Singer's festive tour

IRISH singer Cara Dillon will be peforming at Canterbury's Gulbenkian Theatre on December 3.

Touring her critically acclaimed Christmas show - Upon A Winter's Night - it spins off her festive album of the same name released last year.

The set will feature songs both ancient and modern.

Tickets for the show are on sale now.

Artists get Stuck-in

ARTISTS John Hosking and Eamon Everall are staging an exhibition to celebrate the conclusion of the Folkestone Triennial.

Double Edged and Beyond runs until November 30 at the Sassoon Gallery in Grace Hill.

The duo both specialise is Stuckism - an art movement founded by Medway's Billy Childish in 1999.

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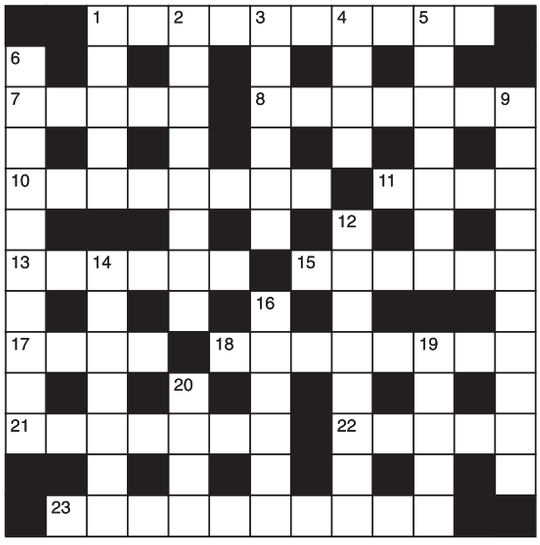
PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across
1. Cryptic (10)
7. Normal (5)
8. Procedure (7)
10. Being (8)
11. Suspended (4)
13. Harmony (6)
15. Grating (6)
17. Deficit (4)
18. Outrageous (8)
21. Ceded (7)
22. Trunk (5)
23. Presence (10)

Down
1. Rodent (5)
2. Key (8)
3. Skilful (6)
4. Image (4)
5. Uneven (7)
6. On time (10)
9. Proposal (10)
12. Scare (8)
14. Examine (7)
16. Evaded (6)
19. Concur (5)
20. Border (4)

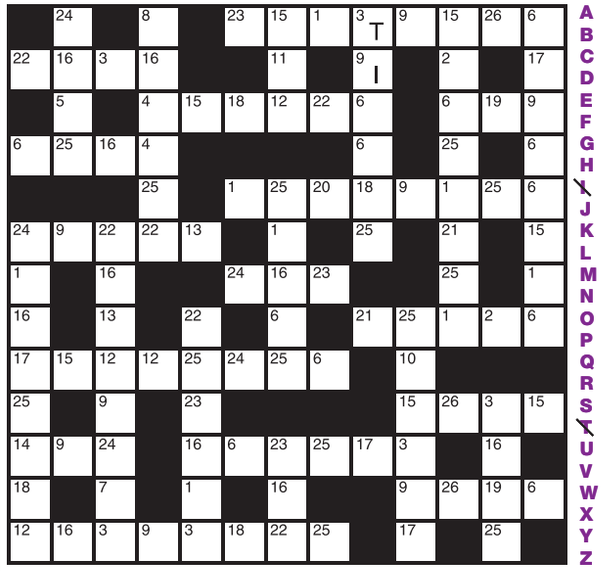
Cryptic

Across
1. I represent change and the readiness to accept it (10)
7. Collect more pay (5)
8. Close shaves? (7)
10. Those who crib in exams upset teachers (8)
11. Bird takes direction at first light (4)
13. It's inadvisable to get us confused with wine (6)
15. Walk slowly along the street with a list (6)
17. Goddess being encored (4)
18. Worn after rowing? (8)
21. Fisherman's profit? (3,4)
22. Got an order to dance (5)
23. Remembers about prayers (10)

Down
1. Former French island Napoleon went into (5)
2. A Trieste composition (8)
3. Stay outside or go (6)
4. Even well-done steaks are nowadays! (4)
5. After work rushed in so as to see the entertainer (7)
6. Wise safeguard, but I put no care into it (10)
9. One's hotel accommodation (6,4)
12. Fit as a lithe cat might be (8)
14. Sound cheerful while going round the short way (7)
16. Underground route (6)
19. Six points for climbers (5)
20. For this pudding turn the gas to zero (4)

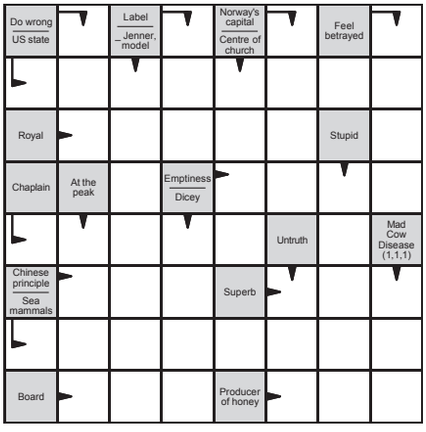
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		T						I				
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Arrowword

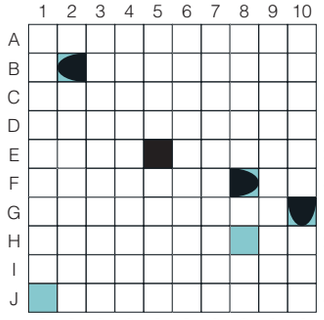


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

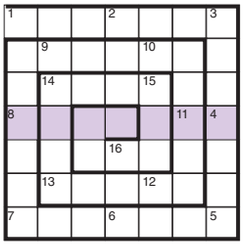
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Whip
2. Tor
3. Public pool
4. Not closed
5. Pleasant
6. Biblical garden
7. Immediately following
8. Discretion
9. Amphibian
10. Slimming plan
11. Group of players
12. Repast
13. Plunder
14. Ruffian
15. Insect
16. Novice

Keyword clue: A Canadian city

SUDOKU

Hard

				5				
2	3							9
	7			9	8	2		
		6			2		9	
3			5		9			2
	9		7			3		
		7	9	6			8	
1							4	5
				4				

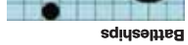
Easy

8				3				5
	3			2		9		7
7						8	3	2
		8	3	1				6
	7	3					1	
2			5	9	7	4	8	
4	9				3			8
		1		6			5	4
6	8			5		3		

Solutions

Arrowword

Battleships



Double Crossword
Cryptic
Across: 1 Enterprise; 7 Raise; 8 Scrapes; 10 Cheaters; 11 Dawn; 13 Unwise; 15 Stroll; 17 Isis; 18 Pullover; 21 Net gain; 22 Tango; 23 Recollects. Down: 1 Exile; 2 Treatise; 3 Resort; 4 Rare; 5 Soprano; 6 Precaution; 9 Single room; 12 Athletic; 14 Whistle; 16 Tunnel; 19 Vines; 20 Sago.
Quick
Across: 1 Mysterious; 7 Usual; 8 Process; 10 Creature; 11 Hung; 13 Unison; 15 Grille; 17 Loss; 18 Flagrant; 21 Yielded; 22 Torso; 23 Attendance. Down: 1 Mouse; 2 Solution; 3 Expert; 4 Icon; 5 Unequal; 6 Punctually; 9 Suggestion; 12 Fighter; 14 Inspect; 16 Include; 19 Agree; 20 Edge.
Codeword
1=R, 2=B, 3=T, 4=M, 5=Z, 6=S, 7=H, 8=J, 9=I, 10=X, 11=W, 12=L, 13=Y, 14=F, 15=O, 16=A, 17=C, 18=U, 19=K, 20=Q, 21=V, 22=D, 23=P, 24=G, 25=E, 26=N
Word Spiral
1 Lash; 2 Hill; 3 Lido; 4 Open; 5 Nice; 6 Eden; 7 Next; 8 Tact; 9 Toad; 10 Diet; 11 Team; 12 Meal; 13 Loot; 14 Thug; 15 Gnat; 16 Tyro/Tiro.
Keyword: Toronto

Sudoku - Easy

8	6	2	7	3	9	1	4	5
1	3	4	8	2	5	9	6	7
7	5	9	6	4	1	8	3	2
9	4	8	3	1	2	5	7	6
5	7	3	4	8	6	2	1	9
2	1	6	5	9	7	4	8	3
4	9	5	1	7	3	6	2	8
3	2	1	9	6	8	7	5	4
6	8	7	2	5	4	3	9	1

Sudoku - Hard

6	1	9	2	5	3	4	7	8
2	3	8	6	7	4	5	1	9
5	7	4	1	9	8	2	3	6
7	5	6	4	3	2	8	9	1
3	4	1	5	8	9	7	6	2
8	9	2	7	1	6	3	5	4
4	2	7	9	6	5	1	8	3
1	6	3	8	2	7	9	4	5
9	8	5	3	4	1	6	2	7

4 quirky places for a weekend

Fed up with hotel rooms that are all the same? **Mike Pickup** has a selection of unusual places to stay.

Stay at your convenience. Fancy stunning sea views? Then there's nowhere better than The Wee Retreat in Sheringham, Norfolk. As you may have guessed, this is an old Victorian toilet block on the sea-front that has been converted into a unique two-bedroom two-bathroom holiday home with unrivalled views of the beach and out to sea. The air doesn't get any fresher than this. The village is a short walk along the promenade so popping out for shopping or a meal couldn't be easier. In the evening you can sit on the balcony and enjoy the sound of the sea lapping the shore.

■ **https://www.norfolkcottages.co.uk/north-norfolk-coast-cottages/sheringham/1540-wee-retreat**

Chocs Away

Planes no longer use the bombing range at RAF Wainfleet in Lincolnshire but that needn't stop you admiring the stunning views from the old observation tower. Originally an army artillery range, it became a bombing range in 1938 and it's where The Dam Busters practised for their famous raid. It has double bedrooms on three floors with the living room on the fourth floor offering 360° views across the marsh to The Wash and Hunstanton. The nearby village of Friskney has a village shop as well as the Lincolnshire Wildlife Park. If you want the beach, Skegness is eight miles away and Bateman's Brewery Visitor Centre is nearby. It's based in an old windmill overlooking the River Steeping. You can enjoy a drink in the Windmill Bar and play traditional outdoor games for a day out with a difference.

■ **http://www.cottages.com/cottages/raf-wainfleet-the-tower-ukc1178**

Head in the clouds

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■ **www.picdumidi.com**

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Life yet in the airport saga

WE write in response to your article last week regarding Thanet District Council's vote to re-designate the status of Manston Airport from aviation to mixed development usage.

As long term campaigners we were of course disappointed with the decision but, as pragmatists, we realise that the council is under pressure to submit a new local plan in order to secure greater control in the face of government pressure to build an ever increasing number of houses in Thanet.

However, with multiple investors still interested in providing an aviation option at Manston hope is not entirely diminished and any future compulsory acquisition of the site would override the local plan anyway.

The decision cabinet made last week is just the beginning of the process to publish a new local plan not the end. Along the way there will be recommendations from the cross party overview and scrutiny panel, then a full council vote in January followed by a six week public consultation.

In the event of the revised local plan being voted through at full council it will be imperative that all supporters in favour of a reopened airport respond to the consultation with coherent objections even if they have done so before. On this occasion the responses will bypass TDC and go directly to an independent secretary of state for determination.

Ruth Bailey & committee of
Supporters of Manston Airport

We must build more houses

YOUR editorial last Sunday rightly identifies the need for more houses.

It is a national disgrace that we have allowed the current situation to develop where houses are unaffordable to first-time buyers; those that can afford it are investors in a commodity rather than a home, and outright homeowners sit on a pile that has an absurd value that is a meaningless relative.

When schemes do get approved, the objectors come out in droves citing this or that reason for their opposition; green belt, insufficient infrastructure, loss of amenity, some historical artefact, feature or whatnot and, laughable if it wasn't so just plain tragic, retention of a site's use as an airport which is just absurd, this fails even the most cursory of examinations.

The proposed garden city at Otterpool is a bold plan on a scale that recognises the need for houses and employment, but it is already mired in objections - from people whose houses stand on what was once a green field.

Edward Baker,
Tunbridge Wells

Where are the contributions?

INTERESTING to see the two articles in your edition last week by Tom Pyman the first about the 1,900 houses agreed by Medway Council at Rochester Riverside the second the 2,500 houses recently agreed by Thanet council for Manston Airport site Stone Hill Park.

In Medway, their council have put forward a requirement for 25 per cent affordable housing and a total contribution required from the developers for £13m for infrastructure contributions for their 1,900 houses .

Meanwhile, in Thanet, what is the equivalent shopping list?

The answer is a big fat zero because Thanet council believe in making life easy for their prospective developers and not putting forward any infrastructure requirements that developers should be required to provide presumably to encourage developers to flock to Kent's 'Big Easy'.

Using Medway's example, Thanet council and Kent County Council should be tabling requirements for at least £17m of contributions from the Stone Hill Park mob.

David Moorish,
Westgate on Sea

LETTER OF THE WEEK

The district council system is failing us

ALL over the world secessionist groups are trying to divide nations and the response from governments who face a nationalist surge ranges from a crushing authoritarianism to a democratic debate.

Spain has veered towards the former and the UK, sensibly went for the latter, with the Scottish referendum. It will be interesting to see which is the better way.

Why is this, what are the common factors at play here?

I would say poor economic policies that impose an unfree, market version of capitalism, extreme variations in wealth and unresponsive governance.

Even in a stable democratic state like the UK these factors have damaged social capital and community, cooperation, unity and resilience.

The Brexit referendum is explainable by reference to these factors and was as much an anti Westminster push back as it was an anti Brussels plebiscite.

In south east England, Canvey Island is seeking some autonomy from its district and it is probably not alone.

The district council as an entity, has probably had its day and central government needs to lead this tired old nag to the knackers yard.

The more successful districts have strong local economies and may last a little longer, but others do not.

Thanet is the pantomime horse of this sector and try as it might its electorate cannot seem to affect any worthwhile reform.

This failure to deliver lasting effective change is crushing Thanet's social capital and is damaging its economy.

Will some form of independence and cooperation within the communities of Thanet, linked to a strong stategic unitary partner, offer a better more prosperous future? I hope so.

George Nokes
Dover

[We quite agree with this one...]

I HOLD to the view that if one submits a letter to a newspaper one does so exclusively, one doesn't use a scatter-gun approach sending the same letter to one and all in the hope of successful publication.

Yet I have seen the same letters and arguments between Messrs Bullen and Dutton these past weeks in more than one publication, including this one, and they should desist the practice.

John Ward Moorhouse,
Tunbridge Wells

Stop trying to flog us insurance

I CAN'T be the only pensioner that finds the ads for life insurance depressing.

It isn't the content that is depressing it's the fact that nearly every second advert throughout the day is for the insurance.

It also does not help anyone who has had a recent loss.

Another thing is that anybody that can afford it already has it and anyone who can't afford it knows that the state will pay for the funeral.

David Turner,
Sevenoaks

Vote for young... but what next?

I SHARE Robert Heathfield's sentiment in his letter last week, that if you are eligible to pay tax at 16 or 17, you should be enfranchised, and he cites the American colonists as precedent: "No taxation without representation". His argument is ineluctable.

Would he though, by the same token, disenfranchise those who are over 18, who have the right to vote, because they are at university, or out of work? Would he disqualify anybody not paying taxes, long-term unemployed, people in work but on benefits, the retired?

Ben Hardy,
Tunbridge Wells

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Boxley

by **Pam Penfold from Rainham**

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Isle of Wight Sounds of the 60s Carry on New Year Party

Warner Bembridge, Isle of Wight
Friday 5 January, 2018 • Quote: BE1-KOS

GN Holidays & Voyages are taking over Warner's Bembridge Coast hotel again in early January 2018 - our 10th year in a row. Our must-do annual party, for over 40s only, has guests returning year after year to 'Carry On' celebrating the New Year. With a packed entertainment programme featuring original 60s bands Union Gap UK and The Cufflinks plus The Beached Boys, Vicki Lambert's tribute to 60s divas, great food, Free drinks from 6pm to midnight nightly, and free car ferry crossing, a great start to 2018 is assured.

INCLUDED: Free drinks 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • Full entertainment programme • 3 nights standard en-suite chalet - upgrade to main hotel building from £30pp • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free car ferry crossing • Free parking

3 nights half board PLUS from £289pp

Isle of Wight Come Dancing Party

Warner Bembridge Coast
Friday 5 January, 2018 • Quote: BE1-2-KOS

Fans of ballroom and latin dancing will love our popular Come Dancing Party, running alongside the 60s music themed Carry on New Year Party at Warner Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. Hosted by World Champion dancers Warren & Kristi Boyce, this party break features up to 8 hours dance tuition and social dancing, a Gala Ball, a huge dance floor with reserved tables and seating exclusively for dancers. You can also enjoy live entertainment in the show lounge featuring Union Gap, The Cufflinks & Vicki Lambert as 60s Divas and free drinks every evening.

INCLUDED: Free drinks from 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • Up to 8 hours dance tuition and social dancing • Gala Ball • Reserved tables and seating • Live nightly entertainment • 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free car ferry crossing • Free parking

3 nights half board PLUS from £269pp

Bringing On Back The 60s & 70s Party

Warner Lakeside, Haying Island
Friday 20 April, 2018 • Quote: LK4-KOS

GREAT entertainment, good food and a setting in 32 acres of grounds near the sea make Warner's Lakeside resort on the South Coast perfect for a spring getaway. Entertainment includes New Amen Corner's new show Bringing On Back The 60s plus a tribute to Abba and more. Add FREE drinks from 6pm-midnight and an allocated table for dining and entertainment that's yours for the weekend and this is one party you won't want to miss. Over-40s only.

INCLUDED: FREE bar 6pm-midnight every night – selected branded beers and spirits, house wine by the glass, selected soft drinks and mixers • Full entertainment programme • 3 nights standard en-suite chalet accommodation – upgrades available • 3 breakfasts and 3 dinners • Free parking

3 nights half board PLUS from £359pp

Bringing On Back The Good Times All Star 60s Party

Warner Bembridge, Isle of Wight
Friday 21 September, 2018 • Quote: BE9-KOS

Join us at Warner Bembridge as our summer of fun continues with a packed entertainment programme featuring 60s sensation Marty Wilde and The Wildcats, Steve Ellis supported by Vanity Fare and Union Gap UK. With Free drinks from 6pm to midnight every evening, great entertainment and a free car ferry crossing, here's a party to add extra sizzle to your summer.

INCLUDED: Free drinks 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • Full entertainment programme • 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrade to main hotel building available • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free car ferry • Free parking

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GREEN: Kia Optima Sportswagon PHEV plug-in hybrid can travel up to 38 miles on pure electric power. Pictures: Kia

Kia's green future driven by plug-in hybrid estate

KIA is charging ahead with its fleet of alternative-powertrain models, adding a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) version of the Optima Sportswagon.

It joins the Optima saloon PHEV, Niro hybrid and PHEV crossover and all-electric version of the Soul.

The highly-specified, standalone Optima Sportswagon PHEV, priced £32,645 after the government's £2,500 plug-in car grant, is part of Kia's goal of a 25pc cut in fleet average CO2 emissions by 2020, compared to 2014.

Thanks to increased storage capacity in its lithium-ion polymer batteries, the Optima Sportswagon PHEV has a longer all-electric range, lower CO2 emissions and better fuel economy than the plug-in hybrid saloon. The increased storage capacity of 11.26kWh (saloon 9.8kWh) is because the Sportswagon is likely to carry heavier loads.

To compensate for the batteries' extra weight, the estate's has specially-tuned suspension and bigger rear brake discs.

The Sportswagon PHEV can travel up to 38 miles on pure electric power (saloon 33 miles) with a CO2 figure of 33g/km (saloon 37g/km) and 201.8mpg combined (saloon 176.6mpg).

Despite its green credential, it can cover the 0–60 mph sprint in 9.4 seconds and has a top speed of 119mph.

Ingenious packaging of the batteries in the boot floor, plus a 15-litre reduction in fuel tank capacity, still provides a 440-litres load bay, rising to 1,574 litres with the 40/20/40 split rear seats folded, and can carry 390kg.

Connectivity and advanced driver assistance features include navigation with an eight-inch touchscreen which also gives information on the status of the batteries, nearby charging stations, energy use based on driving style and battery range as well as a number of other sophisticated technologies.

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MPV to SUV A-OK for all-new 5008

Peugeot looks all set to become a key player in the seven-seat SUV sector after reinventing its 5008. It's stylish, roomy and pleasing to drive, says Andy Russell

Peugeot 5008

Price:	from £24,495
Engine tested:	1,199cc, 131hp, three-cylinder turbo petrol with six-speed manual gearbox
Performance:	0-62mph 10.9 seconds; top speed 117mph
MPG:	55.4 combined
CO2 emissions:	117g/km

MPV to SUV, Peugeot has reinvented the 5008 and expects big things from this new, seven-seater.

Launched in 2009, the 5008 chalked up 20,000 UK sales as a seven-seat multi-purpose vehicle - Peugeot aims to find 5,500 customers for the new sport utility vehicle version in its first full year.

One of the most stylish C-segment SUVs, Peugeot has cleverly disguised the 5008's size with an alloy trim strip running along the roofline and down into the rear lights which makes the profile look smaller and sleeker.

While seven-seat SUVs are replacing MPVs, the 5008 is more biased towards carrying people than off-road work. There's no four-wheel drive but advanced grip control is optional.

Launched with 100 and 120hp 1.6 and 150hp 2.0-litre turbo diesel and 130hp 1.2-litre and 165hp 1.6-litre turbo petrol engines, new 130hp 1.5-litre and 180hp 2.0-litre turbo diesels, the former manual, the latter with a new eight-speed automatic gearbox, arrive soon.

The surprise package is the peppy 1.2-litre, three-cylinder PureTech petrol unit which hauls the 5008 along really rather well.

If comfort is your priority, lower-spec models with smaller wheels and deeper tyres are best as high-spec 19in wheels make the ride firmer and noisier. On the plus side, larger wheels make the handling more rewarding less body roll. That said, regardless of model – Active, Allure, GT Line or GT – the 5008 is a fine driving companion.

The versatile standard seven-seat layout sees three middle row seats, with reclining backs, which each slide back and forth to transfer some of the limo-like legroom to the third row or increase boot space. With all five seats flat, you've got 2,042 litres of load space. On all but entry model, the front passenger seat back folds flat for loads up to 3.2m long.

Peugeot's innovative i-Cockpit is a breath of fresh air - you look at the latest 12.3in digital head-up display over the top the small steering wheel while an eight-inch tablet-like touch-screen controls most functions so no fiddly buttons.

Despite, bold, rugged looks, the 5008 is more about lugging a load than getting off-road but style, space and versatility are key to its appeal.

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- Committed to providing a quality clinical service

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Carolyn Flegg, Outpatients Manager on 01843 234569

Theatres Administrator (Margate)

Part Time – 22.5 hours per week **Salary – £9.77 per hour**

Closing Date – 15 November 2017 **Interview Date – 24 November 2017**

Qualifications and Experience

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- Competence in IT skills, Word/Excel/Outlook
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Carina Pieries, HR Assistant on 01304 222690

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ARCHANT

Burman calls for belief from Darts

Swindon Town are the visitors to Princes Park in the FA Cup

Football

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

DARTFORD boss Tony Burman has called for his players to believe in themselves ahead of Sunday's huge FA Cup tie with Swindon Town.

The Darts were handed the plum draw in the first round of the world's oldest cup competition after seeing off Burgess Hill Town in a qualifier last month.

A sell-out crowd is expected to be in attendance at Princes Park for the visit of the League Two side, who were gracing the Premier League in the early 1990s.

Dartford go into the game in good nick having beaten St Albans and Bath City in the last fortnight to return to the summit of the National League South - two divisions below Sunday's opponents.

And with the likes of Sutton United and Lincoln City - finally defeated in a glamour quarter-final tie away at eventual winners Arsenal - proving non-league sides can progress deep in the FA Cup, Burman says he is keen to instil a strong team spirit going into what is unquestionably their sternest test of the season so far.

"It's a major, major part of this club to have the players and the supporters together," he said.

"Sometimes it gets knocked a little bit but you try and build a good spirit in the changing room, and we've got that.

"We had it last year and we got it this year.

"There's one or two players in there who haven't won things and they've got to get into that mode of thinking they are good players and they can win.

"It's difficult, it's hard work but we're having a go."

However, Swindon are enjoying a fine season themselves, riding high in fifth position, with many tipping them for promotion to League One.

Should Dartford need extra motivation, the winners of the tie will pocket some £18,000 in prize money.

The game kicks off at 2pm, and will be featured on the BBC's Match of the Day highlights programme later that evening.

Dartford's county rivals Ebbsfleet United, Maidstone United, Bromley and Gillingham were all in FA Cup action on Saturday.

GLORY: The FA Cup first round begins this weekend Pictures: PA WIRE

Conway off to China as WEC reaches climax

Motorsport

SEVENOAKS star Mike Conway heads to China this weekend to contest the penultimate round of the 2017 World Endurance Championship - the 6 Hours of Shanghai.

The circuit features a combination of long straights and a variety of corners, from very slow hairpins at the beginning and end of the lap, to faster, sweeping corners in the middle sector.

Conway's previous visits have seen him finishes on the podium twice from three visits, including victory in 2014 when he first raced in the WEC with G-Drive Racing in the LMP2 category.

Toyota has won twice in its five previous visits to Shanghai, during its first WEC season in 2012 and then as part of its World Championship-winning 2014 campaign, while last season saw the TS050 Hybrids earn a strong double podium finish.

Toyota, mathematically, still have a shot at the manufacturers' standings but will need to overcome a 58.5-point deficit to Porsche in the final two races of the season.

"I like Shanghai as a circuit and I am looking forward to getting back on track," Conway said.

"The track lay-out demands a lot from our cars and tyres so hopefully we can get everything dialled in; that will be our target in the practice sessions.

So far in 2017, we have won three races but Porsche has won four; even if it is now very difficult to challenge for the World Championship, our target is to win more races. We also want to give the WEC fans another exciting battle between Toyota and Porsche in Shanghai."

STAR: Mike Conway

Sport Shorts

» Email **sports@kosmedia.co.uk** or call **Tom Pyman** on **01233653477**

Loftus-Cheek named in first England squad

KENT'S Ruben Loftus-Cheek has been picked in Gareth Southgate's England squad for the first time.

The Chelsea midfielder, currently impressing on loan at Crystal Palace, is one of three uncapped players to be selected for friendlies against Germany and Brazil this month, alongside Tammy Abraham and Joe Gomez.

A former student at High Firs Primary School and Orchards Academy, the Swanley-raised star has made 22 appearances for Chelsea, and seven so far this season at Palace.

He has worked his way through the England ranks and first signed for the west London club at eight-years-old.

However, former Maidstone United defender Chris Smalling is among those left out of the squad for the games on November 10 and Brazil on November 14.

Southgate said: "I have huge respect for Chris. We want to play in a certain way and the players I have brought in I want to see using the ball from the back and building it up in a certain way."

TALENT: Ruben Loftus-Cheek

BOSS: Daryl McMahon

Fleet forward Brandy close to match fitness

EBBSFLEET United's latest addition is edging closer to his first start for the club.

Daryl McMahon secured the signing of former Manchester United forward Febian Brandy last month, but the former England under-20 international has been restricted to substitute appearances thus far.

Speaking to KoS this week, McMahon said: "He's settled in well, and seems to be getting fitter and fitter but he needs match practice.

"It'll still be a couple of weeks before we see him start."

Brandy was most recently playing in Thailand for Ubon UMT United and has international caps for Saint Kitts & Nevis but made his name as a youngster at Old Trafford, playing alongside the likes of Danny Welbeck and Danny Drinkwater.

Palace at Priestfield for the Gills

GLLINGHAM Ladies are back in action at Priestfield today (Sunday) when they take on south London rival Crystal Palace in a 2pm kick-off.

Jack Wheeler's side last played at Priestfield on September 17, inflicting a heavy 5-0 defeat on Swindon Town Ladies, having already beaten West Ham Ladies 1-0 on the opening day of the season.

Palace are currently fifth in the FA Women's Premier League table with Gills in eighth, and Wheeler is well aware of the threat the opposition will pose.

He said: "Crystal Palace are a big club in our division but we will look to focus on ourselves, utilise our own strengths and use the crowd at Priestfield to our advantage."

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